


CARRY ON SERGEANT!

By
Bruce Dairnsfather

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CARRY ON SERGEANT!



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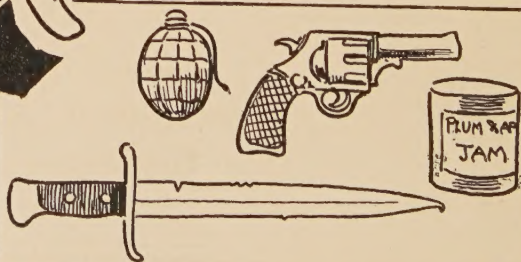
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Bruce Rainsfather.



Carry on Sergeant!

BRUCE BAIRNSFATHER

Author of 'THE BETTER 'OLE

With Illustrations by

THE AUTHOR



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PROLOGUE

I FEEL sure that there are many of us still who remember having a war a little while ago. In case any one confuses the war I mean with any other war, I may as well say that I am alluding to the one that ran successfully for so long, nearly as long as *Abie's Irish Rose*.

That war is now just a good solid chunk of seasoning history, and, as is customary with all history after it has been allowed to pickle in the vats of time, any one may feel free to say what he likes about it.

In some cases it is advisable to have private rooms for this purpose.

Portions of Old Bill's commentary should be heard strictly in camera. Criticisms of the affair, that at the period would have led to arrest, are now permissible. Sufficient time has elapsed for the inevitable crop of writers to have fulfilled what always happens after wars in the way of literature. All the "How" and "Why" stuff has been written and released to the survivors. The whole colossal episode has been duly buried under a mountain of explanation, and the total result is slowly sliding down into the undisturbed depths of libraries.

This book is no endeavor to be a treatise on the "Whys,"

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"Wherefores," "Oughts," "Can'ts" and "Don'ts" of the war. I have tried to do my best to uncover the actual, truthful, inner story of some of the necessary but very small cogs in the mechanism of that war; a story of the thoughts, sayings and doings of a group of the simplest, for I feel that, after all, it was just a multiplication of such groups that composed the thick end of the whole business.

To do this, I have necessarily had to include myself, not with the secret endeavor of airing personal heroics, but, by exposing my innermost thoughts and recounting my own actions and reactions, to help the cause of truth in these pages. I tell also the story of "Old Bill," "Bert" and "Alf" as they wandered in and out and up and down that terrific but ridiculous struggle.

It was my privilege to see the works from the North Sea to the Adriatic, and also from start to finish. So I have done my best to give clear and, I hope, inoffensive "close ups" of the types in the various armies and reflections thereon, as this story proceeds. It wanders along through various times spent with the British, American, French, Australian, Italian and African soldiers. I have tried to give the "low down" on what happened in the "wings" while that great drama was being played. It is my greatest hope that these pages may interest and amuse those of the present generation who were in the great war, or are related to those who were in it, for I know only too well that a time comes shortly when the edges of memory will wear down, and another

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layer of humanity will arise who will have forgotten that last "Big Parade" and be all set for another one. This may be a gloomy forecast but I fear it's a true one.

Here's a little episode that illustrates this surmise.

I happened to be in a certain English city one night, and was wending my way back from the theater at a very late hour. It was soon after the war ended. I paused in a deserted square to light a cigarette and, as I did so, noticed that the center was occupied by a large monolithic monument. I immediately decided in my mind that it was a monument of some kind for the Great War, for the only war that counted with me was the last one. Egotistic, but a common fault in war veterans. Being curious, however, I crossed the street and approached the structure. I felt I could already see the inscription: "In honor of those who fell in the Great War." I arrived in front of the pile and struck a match to read. The monument was in memory of the Crimean War! I stopped and thought sadly about this. No doubt time was when that war mattered an awful lot. This monument meant an awful lot. No doubt it was honored with a bank of flowers on anniversary day; but now all that had faded away. Those to whom the monument meant memory, and a lesson, had long since gone. Here it was, just a dirty gray lump of stone, no longer a memorial of vital note, no longer a warning against warfare. Just a useful landmark to the city, the lower portions frequently used to scratch a match. I, myself, had just made the

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mistake that is the cause of half the trouble. I had felt my war was the only one that mattered and thought all memorials belonged to it. All the granite and marble now erected in various parts of the world as a memorial to that last appalling encounter will fail to stop the next one. This is one of the reasons why there will always be a "next" war. Time slowly casts a rather attractive veil over past painful adventures. Forgetfulness is the great enemy of experience. The edges of the horror get rubbed away. The wounds of the race are healed, and a new generation, unversed in the last experience, arises, all set for fresh trouble.

But there are other ingredients besides forgetfulness that throw a mantle of enchantment over war. War has a peculiar fascination. It is much more horrible to those out of it than to those in it. All wars have moments of great pleasure. It has real joy and romance in its make-up. There are masses who enjoy a war if only as a relief from their peace-time occupation. At times it can be more horrible than imagination can portray; at others, it can be more pleasant.

This can be easily understood of earlier wars, where the battles and implements were less severe, but this statement applies to that last mechanical horror as well. It may be roughly compared to a street accident or some terrible mutilation, or death from mountain climbing. The onlookers, or hearers of the story, are not deterred. If a man this year falls off Mont Blanc and is impaled on a glacier, it

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gives no pause to the adventurers of the next year; if anything, it proves an incentive to them. In my own humble opinion, wars are necessary for biological reasons, and the best way to make them less frequent, if you don't like them, is to be ready for the next one.

I shall now leave this exalted mental analysis and toboggan down into the whirlpool of adventure that was the home of millions for so many years.

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CHAPTER I

ONE OF THE BUNCH, AND HOW IT ALL STARTED

THE war was run by millions: millions of men, and millions of money. Ants have wars, utilizing millions of ants. From an aeroplane the late human war looked much as an ant war looks to an observer who peers at the ground. It is interesting to pick out any one ant, on such an occasion, and take him as a typical specimen. I therefore suggest using myself, thereby exposing a typical lump of necessary war material and a unit by which an understanding of the entire mass may be obtained. Each individual member, of all the millions engaged, had his own particular story. Each soldier in that vast array was swathed about with human ties outside the war. His daily deeds, his escapes or his death launched human ripples into the world outside the war, like stones dropped into a pond.

Taking myself as a typical ant in the vast ant heap will, I feel, help to give proportion to the various events and thoughts that I am about to set down. Here goes:

My father was a soldier by trade. At an early age he chose the soldier business as his life's work and carried

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out his resolution by going into the Indian Army. I was hatched in India and, owing to the loving care of my father and mother, was slowly, surely, but unconsciously ripened for use in the Great War. What millions of parents were unconsciously preparing sons for it all over the world!

I come from a military family. On all sides our family tree is prickly with colonels and generals; here and there an admiral has crept in, but we couldn't help that. It was therefore only natural that I was pushed into the soldier trade, too. This was long before the war, and I was very young. I hated the soldier job. Not even the best battle could make me like it. I dislike fighting, particularly with strangers, and without an introduction. After a year of this pre-war soldier work, wherein my greatest success was achieved by caricaturing the various officers about me, I quit and went into the electrical engineering field with the secret idea of working at nights with brush, pen and pencil. I went through the apprentice stage and emerged into a trained engineer, beginning at a salary of five dollars a week and amplifying this sum by my art work at nights. For some months I attended an art school, and my whole real nature was bent toward art. I progressed in that direction, while the engineering became simply a field for observation and a hunting ground for models.

I was sent by my employers to Newfoundland on a certain engineering matter and got back to England just as it became obvious that there was going to be a war. A

ONE OF THE BUNCH

short while later I got the sack from the engineering firm, who were now hard hit by the general situation. They had to economize and stop all forms of reckless expenditure; so they decided to curb the load imposed on them by my now fifteen dollars a week. They were wise. I think I was worth only ten.

So here I was now in July of 1914 out of all jobs, for "art" closed up like a clam as well. The most important thing was to find work, and noticing that the authorities wanted soldiers for the matter in hand I went and joined up. They were very glad to see me. They said: "Here comes another one, now we can start the war." My previous training as a soldier came in handy. I was made a second lieutenant, put in a tent, then put on a boat, and dumped out in France. Never shall I forget the romantic, exciting kick we got out of this great adventurous beginning. We of the original starting crowd were the envy of all those about us who were not supposed to be trained enough. The poor souls were in a frenzy of envy and jealousy. They all thought the thing would be over before they could get there! That just gives an idea of the popularity of war.

Now it had so happened that in my engineering period I was for a considerable time employed on the lighting, driving and general upkeep of the electrical plant at a large brewery in central England. Here, daily, I mixed with hundreds of men of all types. I worked with them, ate and drank with them and knew them. Here it was that I

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had found Old Bill *before the war*. I found him, but thought no more about it. He interested and amused me intensely. I filed him in my head and had the file with me when I went to the war. So that is how we both got there. With the image of Bill in my mind, I had only to await his physical arrival to screw him down on paper.

Before going further, I feel I shall aid this story by briefly outlining the entire scenario as it appeared to an ordinary individual, a rough sketch of the proceedings which went on from start to finish in the murky business. I know you can get a thousand histories of what happened and how, but here is my condensed version. It may not be right. It is simply how it all looked to me. The whole thing condensed into tabloid form, retaining as many vitamins and calories as possible, went like this.

A few weeks before that memorable date, August 4, 1914, it became apparent to the taxpayers of England that there was an unpleasant atmosphere in Europe. Old Bill and his friends, being milder forms of taxpayers, treated the matter with calm indifference until as late a date as possible. There was a bar somewhere, which, on or about the first of August, had the benefit of hearing Old Bill explain, with the aid of some darts you throw at a circular cork board by way of a game, exactly what ought to be done to the Germans. But it was all rather vague. Bill and his friends that night did not clearly know what it was the Germans had done, were doing, or were going to do, but

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thanks to the Press they had a useful incentive to indignation. When it had been decided that war was a necessity, the Government, utilizing the Press like a film director's megaphone, found Old Bill and his pals a willing audience.

The possibility of a row (and war is only an enlarged form of row) immediately roused in vast masses of men that ever existing natural instinct to revel in a fight. The very thought of war sent a roguish tingle through many veins. But there were other incentives. There are always, for example, many who welcome the adventurous excitement of a war as a pleasurable break in the dull, hum-drum responsibilities of Peace. Whatever the motive power for warlike ardor, it is just as well to wrap it up in heroic and flamboyant garb. It was much better to tell your wife, or your girl, that you felt it only right to go to the war, as a sort of crusader, than to admit that you had a secret tickle of adventurous excitement, or welcomed war as a change in routine.

However, all these little psychological points don't matter much. Nearly everybody got there somehow,—some one way, some another, mostly willing, some reluctant. But to make assurance doubly sure, an assortment of stirring slogans were published as an aid to enthusiasm:

“Poor little Belgium;”
“The Iron Heel of Prussianism;”
“Our Stricken Ally, France;”
“The Mailed Fist,” etc., etc.

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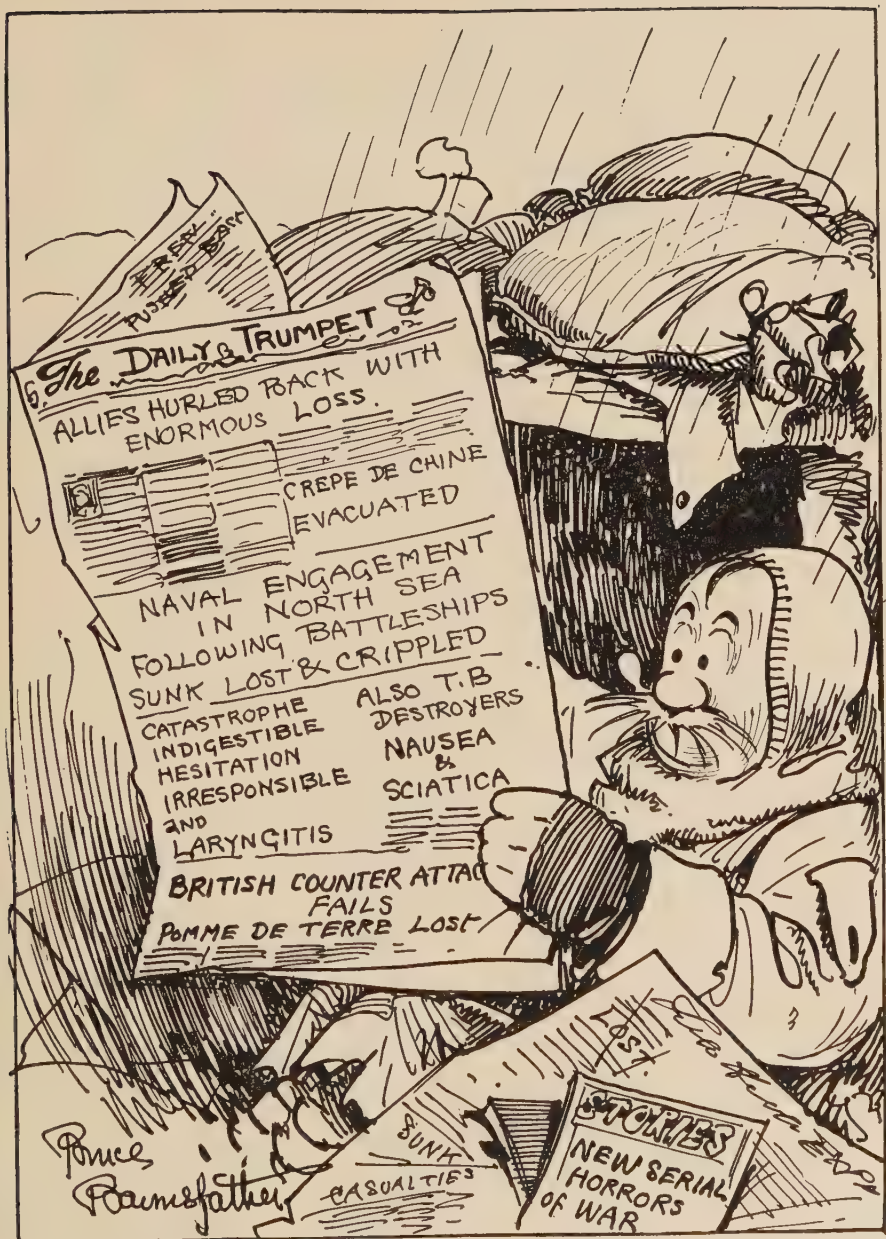
These, presumably, were necessary and helpful, but all Old Bill needed, once he heard there was a war on, was a guide to show him where it was and some sort of accredited official to tell him when to start. Also, bless his heart, much later, an official to tell him when to stop! To this day Old Bill and his million identical mental types do not comprehensively or coherently know what it was all about. They have a rough idea of its necessity, its colossal size in life and money, its sadness and laughter, but they have never fully unraveled the true foundations of its worldly cause, and it is certain that other candid millions can join them in this ignorance.

Bill, Bert and Alf, and all those for whom they stood as symbols, in all armies, are still comfortably ignorant of the political intricacies which brought about the World War.

It is not for me to investigate or comment on the ponderous inner history of the affair but simply to record certain adventures of those dwellers in the mud.

In the carrying out of great international motives, a thousand and one Estaminet Nights' Entertainments were launched. To the great mass of participants in the struggle, the Great War remains a memory of mud, blood, love and adventure, immersed in a sea of human story.

It is very difficult for those who never had the fortune to get to France during the war fully to comprehend many of its remarkable peculiarities. A clear appreciation of some of the curious, if not ludicrous, aspects of the front



Maggie sends "Old Bill" out some papers to cheer him up

ONE OF THE BUNCH

is most interesting, and therefore it is useful to adopt the following illuminating plan:

Mentally transplant the entire outfit across the Atlantic and super-impose the war, geographically, on to a map of America. You will find that, roughly speaking, the length of the Western Front was as from New York to Buffalo, or from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The distance apart of the two opposing lines would vary from the width of the Hudson at Hoboken to the width of Fifth Avenue at Forty-Second Street.

If the trenches passed through New York, say, following the line of Broadway, one's morning shelling would be coming from round about Jersey City or Newark. A gun concealed somewhere over there would have reduced the Woolworth Tower to the appearance of a battered corkscrew quite early in the proceedings.

It would be possible to have quite a nice dinner in what was left of the Biltmore or the Commodore, and then go back and sit in a slot full of mud and water somewhere between Times Square and Columbus Circle. It would still be just possible, but not particularly safe, for motor-cars and staff officers to creep along, up and down Park Avenue, sheltering as far as possible behind the tangled mass of ruins which would lie between them and Broadway.

The relative approximate places of abode for various ranks would be:

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Privates—Broadway
Colonels—Fifth Avenue
Generals—Boston
Owners and } Montreal
Organizers }

Now and again, the troops along Broadway would be taken out to rest, which would mean marching as far back as First Avenue and living in what remained of the houses there. Here amid the ruins they would lurk and work until the day came to go back into the front line again. All the time they would be subconsciously aware that this condition existed all the way from New York to Buffalo, and that at no point must a breach be allowed to occur.

For nearly five years several millions sat opposite each other in damp slots in the ground, on a course roughly stretching four hundred miles and approximating the width of a small field apart.

Way back in "Montreal" would be gathered the high voltage brains of the thing. The hotels of "Montreal" would be crowded, some crowded for living and eating, others crowded by reason of having been taken over for officers in connection with the business of running the war.

Military manikins would pervade the palm courts and lounges, in intervals of their office work. These would be known as Staff Officers. They would be very smartly decorated with belts, spurs and medal ribbons and look as far as possible like desirable designs for posters to encourage re-

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cruiting. Countless lunches and dinners would enable them to explain, across well spread tables, exactly how things stood or were getting on, out at the "Broadway" of the war. Their main line of talk would be, "Now if we can only push them back and take 'Ninth Avenue.'" It's so easy to "push" across a lunch table.

Such then, illustrated by simile, was the rough general outline of the giant catastrophe as it appeared in the main. Now let me sketch out briefly what actually happened from the start up to the moment at which America entered the arena. Let me take a rapid survey of how it appeared to the ordinary man, without reference to corpulent books on the subject written, since, with long winded, military details.

The whole thing began on August 4, 1914. A highly courageous mix-up of French, Belgian and British soldiers entered the ring, met the highly trained Germans and were speedily beaten back on the ropes. Much has been written about the nature of this original encounter, the heroic stand at Liege, the subsequent holding of the fortresses and the British at Mons. I do not feel qualified to speak of these things in a military sense, but simply to say that that original British Army which rushed out to help stem the tide in the first few hours of the war, put up a marvelous show and with this, I feel sure, all the world will agree.

They did their best, but their best wasn't good enough.

Luckily the gong went after the retreat from Mons, and the Allies were able to go to their corner.

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Then came the miraculous battle of the Marne, which ended Germany's big chance of a speedy knock out. Just as France looked like being carried from the ring, Paris a crushed and cracked thing of the past, and England a blockaded island, some one did something which caused the advancing Teutons to shut up like a bashful oyster. What exactly it was nobody has quite adequately explained. Von Kluck's wife might know.

Had any one, before the war started, been privileged to look down from a bird's eye view and see the rival arrangements for warfare, he must have unhesitatingly backed Germany to win. Who could lose with such a machine-made, armor-plated, professional gang as they had? And who could hope to win with such a comparatively amateurish, puzzled group of mixed but courageous adventurers as we had? Yet here on the Marne, the fairy tale happened.

As every one now knows, Paris was never taken, there was no Sedan, and the front eventually solidified itself into four hundred miles of trenches.

With the exception of a few comparatively small bulges, it remained set this way for the rest of the war.

Having got fixed and landed with the upkeep of these trenches, the next thing was how to win the thing and finish it. This is where the tough part began. Years came and went, and still the front row of the stalls in the European theater of war scarcely shifted. France, Belgium and Great Britain did all they could.

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For some time we got a false air of elation at the idea of Russia scratching at them from behind. When the news came through that General Somethingisky or Hopoff had been using shells made of soap, and finally quit, or got lost in a bog, we gave up hoping that way.

After the first few years it became obvious that somebody with enormous numbers, money and ammunition would have to come and do something, or we should either be there for life, or driven into the sea.

Then suddenly a rumor began. The rumor became a fixed idea. The idea became an agonized hope. The hope got an answer.

The answer came from America.

The United States with its full weight, from all angles, was coming to finish it. This news produced for the Allies a sensation similar to a reprieve from the chair.

We all clung on to the ropes till America came. Then the final round began. Millions of men, money and shells pounded the courageous, tired and outnumbered Germans into their corner. The towel was thrown in, and the monstrous struggle was over. I only wish it had been at Boyle's Thirty Acres or in the Stadium so that everybody could have seen it. Or possibly it could have been put on the road with good results. It seems such a pity that there are so many who couldn't get out to see it!

The production lost heavily in Europe, but they might get a bit back on the road over here.

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Anyway, whether it goes on the road or not, the outline I have given is roughly how the thing appeared to me, though what it was all about, I am rather weak on still.

Anyway, the Allies won it—so they say.

CHAPTER II

THE TALE OF THE MUD

THE first trench ought to have been kept as a souvenir. Some interested society should have had it dug up and placed in the Natural History Museum, behind glass. I believe, in theory, a trench is meant only as a temporary fortification. Webster gives the word "trench" the following interpretations:

1. A long narrow cut in the earth; a ditch.
2. A more or less extended narrow ditch or excavation, the earth from which is thrown up in its front as a parapet.


Webster has painted the lily. Old Bill's first trench ran as follows: "A zigzag slot across shallow lake or bog. A permanent abode of soldiers." (See "Canal.")

Trenches were used by the ancients, but never in the course of the world's history did life get transplanted into the soil for such a period and with such permanence as it did in that last Great War. A few more years of it and I feel sure shops would have opened along that sandbagged alley, which stretched all the way from the North Sea to the land of condensed milk and yodels.

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It somehow seems a pity that all the real estate possibilities of those trenches have been missed. My first view of this desirable property was round about Messines way, and here it was that I met Old Bill in person and put him down on paper.

Throughout the winter of 1914 we lurked and cursed in those elementary humid slots in the ground. We ate and slept, drank small doses of rum and fed the fires with our biscuits. For relaxation, we stared into the darkness and the future and took an interest in the varying heights of the water. In peace time, sleeping in six inches of soaked straw would probably give you quadruple pneumonia. Out there, it gave you nothing. There were many who would have welcomed pneumonia. But, no sir! pneumonia was as scarce as caviar; we just got fat and healthy. Of course there were some fellows who were lucky and got a bullet through them some place, but we aren't all born with silver spoons in the mouth. And so we passed days and nights, and months and years. Of course we moved around now and again from one fissure in the ground to another. In our case, we lived in one same fissure from November, 1914, to the end of March, 1915. For approximately five months we lived in just one delectable spot, facing the opposition on the other side of the field. We neither retreated nor advanced, for which I was glad. A home's a home; you don't want it wheeled about and lose all the old home ties and landmarks. "Go on living where you are brought up," is my motto. I



So I told him
he ought to 'ave
married 'er

Once
Painsfather

THE TALE OF THE MUD

was always frightened they would order an advance, and we should have to leave the old homestead.

We used to have our morning's shelling round about eight, and our evening's nervous excitement (known as "wind up") about nine. In daylight one kept one's head below the parapet for fear of a puncture; at night we stood upright and even got on top of the ground. The geography was most restricted. The ordinary and necessary human functions of the residents had to be most local in fulfillment. The plumbing was very weak, and the dead in those primitive days were buried practically where they fell.

Man's proximity to Mother Earth could be most clearly felt. Nobody could leave a trench. A wounded man remained till nightfall. The dead were hastily buried. Sometimes on a stormy, rainy, depressing, fearful night, I have heard a voice in the darkness inquire as to the whereabouts of the lime that had been sent up. Lime has long been used as a sedative to aromatic defects.

It was in this happy valley that, round about November, 1914, I burst out into the pictorial interpretation of our lot. Out of sheer bad temper I began to draw. The whole horror of the thing made me laugh. I could not refrain from smiling at the absurdity, the stark, fearful predicament. To-day one might eat and laugh; to-morrow one might be hastily shoveled away and the lime sent for. This was in A. D. 1914. I felt the manners of the period were more in tune with 1914 B. C. A cold and clammy hopelessness

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seized me. I looked at my comrades with a chemical eye. They seemed possibly already dead, so close was the margin that separated them from extinction.

When one momentarily reflected on what we all consider to be our civilized homes and countries, the contrast became more painful. Back in London, brightly lit restaurants; alluringly dressed women; comforts, pleasures and care; hospitals, and well-wishing to the human race, with a deliberate collaboration going on to prolong and safeguard life. Out here, a sinister slot in a sodden field straggling its way off into darkness on either side, with death and decomposition the main probabilities. Many a night I have looked up at the stars and wondered about it all. It was painfully ridiculous, and absurdly pathetic, at ground level. From a height such as the Eiffel or the Woolworth Tower, it must have appeared more ridiculous still.

These were my thoughts as I began to draw, hampered by only one thing in my endeavor to portray this weird predicament, and that was the language. I seriously and conscientiously believe we owe a lot to the swearing ability of soldiers. In my humble estimation, good lusty tropical swearing *and sergeants* did more to hold the war together than anything else. I found it difficult to give euphony to my sub-titles without the real hundred horsepower swearing of the trenches.

I coined the word "blinkin'" to fill the most pressing apertures. I was aided in the portrayal of life there by

THE TALE OF THE MUD

feeling in disagreement with it to an abnormal degree. Dangerous and important as it was in a human sense, I felt the whole thing was grotesque and absurd in extreme. I was convinced that I, at any rate, was absurd. I was occupying about a yard of valuable frontage and was not worth it.

If they had all decided to run away, I would have seconded the motion. As they had all decided to stop, I stayed there. From George the Fifth's point of view, I wasn't too good a thing to try to hold the "Empire on which the sun never sets" together with. I have been in several battles and sat in many trenches but can not get a liking for them. The whole business seems as futile to me as a prisoner having an excellent meal before being taken to the chair.

For the period of the war I kept this weakness secret and donned a cloak of violence and callousness, as far as possible. Many a time I wished that I could be wounded in just such a way as to insure extrication without permanent disablement. I got this gift in the end and it was one of the greatest blessings of my life. The war was really so bad in places that to be snuffed out altogether would have been a pleasurable release.

I feel sure that there are many who have felt the same way about it, and while I touch on this point I submit the following classification of those types most suitable to modern warfare, and those not:

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

<i>Type</i>	<i>Value for War.</i>
Poets	Bad
Authors	
Musicians	
Actors	
Artists	
Husbands	
Athletes	Good
Sportsmen	
Cops	
Stevedores	
Suicides	
Butchers	
Bachelors	

The most suitable person for the front row in a modern war is:

A DULL, STRONG BACHELOR, ORPHAN, WHO IS TIRED OF LIFE BUT HAS BEEN INFLAMED INTO A STATE OF COURAGEOUS FRENZY AGAINST THE OPPOSING FORCES, WHICH CAUSES HIM TO DO AS MUCH VIOLENCE AS HE CAN BEFORE EXTINCTION.

Well, as I said before, it was at this period that I began to draw; and these were my thoughts as I drew. The actual geographical spot was about two miles from the little town of Messines, and about five miles from Armentières, of Mademoiselle fame. The land was very flat. The Germans had pinched the best seats and therefore commanded a good view of our trenches. I felt very much ashamed of our trenches; there was a lack of finish and smartness about them. However you tidied them up, in

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case the Germans called, they got into a mess again. Nothing would stay put; everything gradually slid down into the bog composing the bottom.

I hate untidiness about a home and poor plumbing in this mechanically efficient age in which we live. After all, when you've got to live five years or so in a field below the surface, you might as well try to make the place as attractive as possible,—say a bathroom to every dugout, and something done to keep the rats, rain, mud and bullets from coming into the front room and spoiling the rugs. Some big department store ought to be given the contract for the trenches in the next upheaval. Let us get some pleasure out of trench life anyway. Next time, I want a quaint old Jacobean trench and a dugout with thick oak rafters, a nail studded door and a cheerful red-tiled floor. I want to have friends out on visits so that the passing years won't seem so long.

I consider myself rather a connoisseur in trenches. I have seen all the various styles which existed in all armies. I know all the brands, from the "mud slot" model up to the highly finished concrete de luxe.

Now let me turn for a moment to the lot of Old Bill and his companions. Officers and privates had little difference in dugouts and mode of life in the early days. The chief difference was crowding. Perhaps two officers would be fitted into a dugout and, if folded up neatly at night, were able to sleep there. Privates, however, were treated

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

more on the sardine principle. One really needed a shoe horn to get them out in the morning, or in case of sudden attack.

As the war progressed, trenches became better, and dugouts more luxurious. A time came when concrete and corrugated iron were used to bring about some form of solidity and an impression of comfort. As I observed these improvements creeping into the war, so in proportion my heart sank. "They wouldn't be doing this unless they thought it was going to last a long time," I said to myself. For the first year there was a sort of horrible romance about it all,—a pioneering, happy-go-lucky adventure, a sort of *Three Musketeers* atmosphere. The moment they began to improve the war technically the charm seemed to leave it.

I have lived in a trench which boasted the following interesting conditions:

The water could not be stopped coming in. Where we had managed to dam it off, we found the alternative to be about a foot of slimy mud. Everything kept on sliding down from the sodden parapets into this mud and, unless immediately rescued, disappeared from view. All our rifles were caked with mud, and most of the ammunition had to be extricated from the water or mud from time to time. Thousands of rounds were completely lost. I have frequently been digging in trenches for some purpose and come across buried ammunition. We were all pretty well frozen in hands and feet. Had an attack come along, our



To appreciate this drama fully, it is necessary to realize that Old Bill has just done a mile with the company's rum and there are only another few yards to go

THE TALE OF THE MUD

total resistance power would have been extremely feeble. No doubt the Germans suffered from the same conditions, which helped to equalize matters.

During the first winter of the war I found myself mostly in the line between Armentières and Ypres. Behind us lay shattered farms and villages. During long patches of quiescence it was possible to relieve the monotony by crawling out and moving around among these ruins. Old Bill, Bert and Alf would be frequently combing them over for souvenirs or looking for something to smash up as fire-wood.

CHAPTER III

THE CAFÉ DE LA PAIX

THE village of Vin Ordinaire was an excellent sample of how they liked their villages in France in the winter of 1914. It was a small village with only one street so punctured with shell holes that it looked more like some component part of a volcano than anything else. The street, as a street, was a failure; as an obstacle to traffic, it was an immense success. On either side there was a row of what had once been houses, now simply an interesting collection of jagged, blackened walls and lumps of fallen masonry. A little off to one side, beyond half a dozen shell holes the size of duck ponds, stood the remains of a small stone church, the spire missing and a large star-shaped hole through the tower. The village, however, was in a comparatively excellent state of preservation, for it had one house that up to this moment had, curiously enough, never been hit. It was a small *estaminet*, dignified by the title of the "Café de la Paix." It stood at the end of the village and was separated from the rest of the place by a small field, as free from grass as a French poodle is from hair, and as covered with pits and holes as a successful Gruyère cheese. Just a small four-

THE CAFÉ DE LA PAIX

roomed cottage it was, with a red-tiled roof, slightly battered, a faded green door over which was the sign, "Café de la Paix," printed on a long white board, and two windows covered with ex-sandbag canvas, the glass having long since departed, owing to the mighty concussions that had wrecked the rest of the neighborhood.

It was just one of those unfortunate villages that had been for some time permanently entwined with the front line of the war.

The rival armies had surged in and out of it, like tides in a bay. It had seen Germans one week, and British the next, then back to Germans, again to be followed later by the return of the British. The civilian population had at last found it necessary to retire from the place. Earlier in the proceedings, they had taken the varying fortunes of the struggle with bored calm. They did not particularly care which side was in, so long as there was a chance of making a little money and annexing the food and clothing left over by the soldiers. They had regarded their partly shattered homes with silent philosophy. But now they were gone, and the place was entirely in the hands of soldiers, although the trenches had moved on slightly ahead.

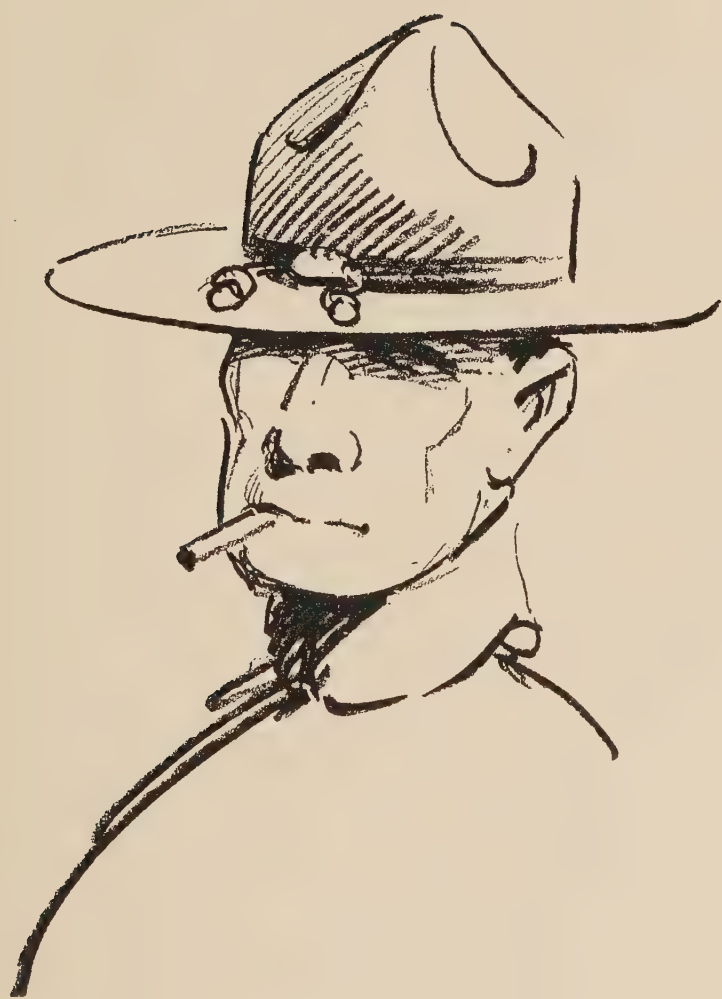
It was a fresh and rather cold spring morning. A sparkling feeling of life was in the air, but none whatever could be seen, except for a couple of misguided sparrows flirting on a leafless and splintered tree, with the top splayed out like the ribs of a coverless umbrella. All was peace.

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

The delightful morning was most unsuitable for war. How strangely silent and still that war could be at times!

Suddenly the silence was broken by the sound of footsteps on the hard uneven ground, and from the direction of the trenches came an officer, rough stick in hand to help him like an Alpine stock across the shell-pitted and tangled surface of the ground. The solitary stars on his shoulder straps alone proclaimed him a second lieutenant. The rest of his muddy and battered attire gave no indication of his rank, but he was easily recognizable as belonging to the type that at the period was being sent out in large numbers as second lieutenants, the supply of the more mature professional officers having been nearly exhausted.

He was young and slender. A certain fineness in his face indicated the possession of an intelligence above the necessary practical toughness of a military life. He was altogether an unsuitable product for a war, but like thousands of his kind was doing his best and had plenty of courage and determination. He was not manufactured of that somewhat coarser and duller material which goes to make the best type of officer. He relied largely upon a small and hurriedly achieved mustache to give him the necessary air of military ferocity. Arriving at the end of the broken village street, he paused and gazed about him. Suddenly his eyes rested on the Café de la Paix and his face took on an angry frown. "Damn them!" he muttered, "they'll see that smoke and start shelling again." A thin wisp of pale



THE CAFÉ DE LA PAIX

blue smoke was distinctly trickling out of the tall red solitary chimney of the Café and curling upward into the still morning air. Second Lieutenant Harwood threw himself into as military a temper as he could and began picking his way between the shell holes toward the *estaminet* with the valiant idea of suppressing the cause of the smoke.

Before he had gone five yards, however, it was necessary to change his plans. A dull boom in the distance was followed instantly by a screeching whistle overhead that terminated in a titanic thunderous crash, a few yards away. Mr. Harwood sought the refuge of the nearest available cover. Half a dozen rapid jumps over debris and shell holes lodged him behind the battered remnant of a wall, which had an appearance of shelter but in reality was about as efficient as a cardboard box. Hardly had he arrived with palpitating heart behind this fancied security than a second shell rushed overhead with the noise of an express train and exploded a few yards down the village street, leaving a slowly descending cloud of gray dust and black smoke in its wake. Mr. Harwood decided that it was best to stay where he was. A third shell soared over and landed with a slightly different sound. Practise had made Harwood a connoisseur in shell noises. He looked out from his shelter and saw that the last shell had exploded far nearer to the Café. "They are after that damned place I know! That smoke was asking for it! Serve 'em bloody well right, whoever it is in there." A fourth shell put all further doubts aside. There

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was a distant dull "boom," and with a rapidly crescendo, swishing sound, much like the flight of a swan, a corpulent and efficient shell crashed into the base of the Café, blowing a gale of bricks into the air.

A great cloud of red dust and black smoke completely obscured all view of the building. As the fog settled it could be seen that the village had undergone structural alterations. The Café de la Paix was no more.

On a bent and twisted fragment of splintered wooden staircase sat three dusty soldiers in a row, staring out ahead of them as if waiting for a photograph. Names reading from left to right, Bert, Old Bill and Alf. They were all dressed in khaki, but perhaps not so smartly as His Majesty's Government would like to see them. Bill was wearing a full length greatcoat, which he had cut down to tunic size with his own pocket knife, without permission. Bert retained ten per cent. of the buttons that he should have had, while Alf had obviously had a large hole in his trousers personally mended by himself, for it looked more like a surgical operation than a darn. There was a slight pause. Presently Old Bill spoke. His voice had a dry and discontented sound.

"Well, there goes our blinkin' *estaminet*, boys." He carefully removed a segment of brick from his lap and tossed it aside.

"I always thought they would 'ave this place before

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long," said Alf, as he struck at his pocket lighter to see if it still worked.

Old Bill turned round at him with an angry frown, his mustache looking like the quills of an electrified porcupine. "Well, why the 'ell didn't ye say so? What's the good of tellin' us now? If ye wants to think in future, think down a trumpet, so as we can 'ear you."

"Well, it's no good shoutin' about, Bill," mumbled Bert, as he took out a crumpled cigarette and looked round at the wreckage. "I'm sorry this 'ere house has gone though." His voice got sentimental. "Why, it was in this 'ere very *estaminet* two years ago that I first met my little Victoire."

Bill exploded again. "Oh, cut that there love stuff of yours, Bert! Every darned 'ouse and château along this blinkin' front was a love nest of yours, at one time or another. If you 'ad your way, you'd 'ave turned this 'ere war into a marriage exchange. What I wants to know is, where are we goin' for a bit of quiet, now this place has gone?"

"It was that fire that must 'ave done it, Bill. The plug must 'ave gone out of the chimney, and they saw the smoke."

Alf got off the step on the stairs and went toward the late fireplace. He suddenly stopped and gazed out of the ruin, his eyes looking like a couple of brown marbles, sewn on to his face.

"Look out, 'ere's our officer."

Bill and Bert immediately got up, and all three instantaneously assumed strong war-like attitudes, gazing off

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intently toward the front-line trenches. Bill helped along the tableau by pointing out something in the distance with one hand, while he secretly dropped his pipe back into a pocket with the other.

Second Lieutenant Harwood, himself assuming a ferocious military demeanor, both foreign and irksome to his nature, approached the trio across the mutilated ground.

"What the devil are you fellows doing here?" he shouted, in as great a sound of temper as possible.

The three turned and saluted. They were actuated more by a desire of getting trouble over speedily, than by any sense of fear. Officers meant little to the trio, unless they were of the experienced weather-beaten kind. Bill became spokesman for the criminals. "We was just on our way down to the ration dump, sir, Sergeant Huskins' fatigue party."

"Well, this isn't the ration dump, and besides you've been told about these houses. Nobody is allowed to hang about here. Who lit that fire?"

Harwood entered the ruin and poked at the remnants of the fireplace with his stick. The trio winked at one another behind his back, before Bill resumed with an indignant voice as though he wished a serious investigation:

"Most extraordinary thing about that fire, sir."

Harwood had sufficient experience to know that a probe into the origin of the fire would be useless, so he proceeded to deal with the situation summarily.

We shall 'ave to stop
usin' this 'otel, boys
They'll get us if we
stays ere much longer



After a sharp rise in real estate

THE CAFÉ DE LA PAIX

“Where’s Sergeant Huskins?”

“Don’t know, sir,” Bert replied with alacrity, feeling somehow that possibly all blame might be transferred to the sergeant.

“He’s down at the dump, I expect, sir,” suggested Bill.

Alf, who had been staring out into the open field with an expression like *The Soul’s Awakening*, suddenly squinted out an excited, “’Ere he is comin’ now!” The trio could always sense the approach of their Sergeant, like lions with their trainer.

Harwood turned, and saw Sergeant Huskins approaching the Café. Way down secretly in his soul was a feeling of intense relief; almost the relief that Livingstone must have felt on the arrival of Stanley. Sergeants meant a great deal to second lieutenants.

Huskins approached, a lump of war-tried, wiry strength, tightly incased in well cared for khaki. He saluted his young officer and turned savagely on the three muddy privates who stood guiltily in a row.

“Now then, out of it, you! What the ’ell are ye doin’ ’ere! Scroungin’ again! Not so much of this getting in-doors! Down to the dump, you lot, with me quick!” He turned to his officer. “You leave ’em to me, sir. There’s been too much creepin’ into these ’ere houses up and down this place. There’s an ’undred sheets of corrugated iron to be shifted up to A trench. That’ll give ’em a wet shirt each, I know!”

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

Harwood felt better. These three couldn't fool Huskins. Help had arrived, and the responsibility required to combat the craftiness of three old soldiers had been shifted. He jerked out the safe stock sentence common to most second lieutenants, "Carry on, Sergeant," and turned to leave on his way to battalion headquarters, where he had been summoned by telephone twenty minutes before.

"Just a minute if you don't mind, sir," said Huskins in a serious voice, as he drew out a folded blue paper from his left-hand breast pocket.

"What is it, Sergeant?" Harwood stopped in his stride and re-entered the ruin.

"I was given this by Captain Massy quarter of an hour ago, sir. It's a memo from Divisional Headquarters. I got instructions to show it to you, sir, and conduct a search."

"Conduct a search?" Harwood looked puzzled. Bill, Bert and Alf were now frozen into a group of respectful curiosity.

Harwood took the paper from Huskins and read it with care.

"It seems you are to search this house, Sergeant. I suppose this is the café they refer to here?"

"Yes, sir." Huskins turned toward the trio. "This is the only place what was known as the Café de la Paix in this 'ere village, wasn't it?"

Bill burst in as spokesman. "Yes, Sergeant."

"Never seen any other," said Bert.

THE CAFÉ DE LA PAIX

"I've known this 'ere pub for over six months. Why we must 'ave sat on them stairs an 'undred times, I dare say."

"Hundred and fifty, Bill," added Alf.

"That's enough of that," growled Huskins. "We all know about that. This is the Café de la Paix, that's certain, and we've got to search this place for somethin' what's been hid here."

Bill, Bert and Alf could do nothing but stare, the words, "hid here," producing the same exciting suspense as a story of buried treasure.

Harwood looked up from a deep study of the blue paper.

"Have any of you ever found anything here? Any coins or paper money, for example?" he asked.

"No, sir," said Bill in a hoarse hollow-sounding voice, and a close observer could have seen his Adam's apple moving up and down like a celluloid ball on a shooting gallery.

"Any of you ever heard the name Charlet?"

Bert's eyes widened as he spoke. "Yes, sir! Charlet. I knows a girl that name, sir, back in Bailleul."

Huskins suppressed this fountain of information. "The officer don't want to hear about your girls."

"But that's the name, Sargint!"

"Yes, that's the name," went on Harwood.

"This paper mentions the name Charlet. It appears that he's a Frenchman or a Belgian or something and at one time owned this Café."

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

"I knows the feller you mean," volunteered Bert.

"Shut up, you!" shouted Huskins.

Bert could be heard murmuring something about Victoire Charlet.

"I think you'd better search the place at once, Sergeant Huskins," went on Harwood. "I don't expect there is anything here now as these men would have been sure to find it."

"Well, sir, they've been practically livin' in this place, and it don't seem likely." He turned to Bert. "'Ere, let's 'ave yer entrenchin' tool, you!"

Bert handed over the implement in question, and Sergeant Huskins prepared to make a practical examination of the remains of the now dismembered Café. His eyes fell upon the remnant of staircase on which Bill, Bert and Alf had been sitting. "It says staircase, don't it, sir?"

"Yes, third step from the bottom."

"Just where we've been sittin'," murmured Bill.

Huskins went across over the accumulated tangled rubbish to the remains of the stairs, followed intently in his actions by four pairs of staring eyes. Three of the pairs were glaring at the operation, with eyes bordering on insanity.

With a rapid blow or two from Bert's entrenching tool, Huskins pried up the board forming the third step of the stairs and reached down inside the cavity thus exposed with his other hand. Suddenly he uttered an exclamation.

THE CAFÉ DE LA PAIX

“Ah! ’ere’s somethin’! ’Ere it is, sir! Just as it says on the paper!”

He brought a small square black tin box to the surface and, brushing it with his sleeve, handed it to Harwood, who opened it, taking out a pile of French paper money, followed by a handful of silver coins. Columbus’s face at the first sight of America can have been nothing to Bill’s at this moment.

Harwood looked at the treasure with astonishment. “Great Heavens! what an extraordinary thing! By gad, the owner’s lucky to get this back.”

“You’re right, sir,” said Huskins dryly, with a glance at the trio. “Funny how it ever got left behind, let alone how it’s here now.”

“They must have had to leave this place in an awful hurry to have left this behind!” mused Harwood. “Well, anyway, it’s been found, Sergeant. That’s the main thing, and I had better take it down to Headquarters right away!” He turned as an afterthought to Bill. “How often have you fellows been in this place?”

“Nearly every day for the last six months, sir,” said Bill through what sounded like a bad attack of asthma; “been in ’ere to get firewood and such like.”

“Curious how you never came across this.” There was an unpleasant silence rudely terminated by Sergeant Huskins.

“Now then, you three, lively with it, get on down to

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the ration dump and shift that corrugated iron! I'll be there in a minute."

"Exactly fifteen hundred and sixty-five francs," said Harwood, who had been rapidly counting—"just the amount mentioned! how lucky!"

Bill, Bert and Alf silently turned and picked their way across the uneven, shell pitted ground. They went many yards in silence. Presently Old Bill spoke.

"Bert!"

"Yus!"

"Alf!"

"Yus."

"Remind me next time we sits on staircases to 'ave a look inside, will ye?"

There was no answer, and the bedraggled khaki trio slowly melted away into the slightly foggy morning.

CHAPTER IV

THE BIRTH OF BILL

MY FIRST six months in the war consisted almost exclusively of doing five days in the trenches and five days out, in front of the Messines Ridge. I started my trench experience in front of Plugstreet Wood and, after a month or so, moved up slightly north. During this period I saw the evolution in trench comfort slowly taking place. It was here that it dawned upon myself and my companions that after all the war would not be over "on Tuesday week," as we had supposed. It was here that we began to suspect that it had come to stay, with every prospect of becoming the normal state of life, with now and again the possibility that either side might break up our growing sense of home life, by declaring peace.

It was here that I found myself the creator of Old Bill, Bert and Alf. It was here that I, after considerable time to think in my allotted slot in the ground, realized a few important though at the time unmentionable facts.

(A) That the residents of the neighborhood did not particularly mind which side won as long as there

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

was money in it, or their farm, house or café was not destroyed.

(B) That hatred varied directly in intensity as the distance from the front increased.

Hatred was at its worst in London and Berlin. By the time you got to the two front rows, a hundred yards apart, only war compelled by duty was there, devoid of any bitterness.

A complete hopelessness seized me. The war, the rain, the mud and the endless look of those conditions seemed to wall me in. One gazed over sodden parapets at sad watery sunsets and got stopped at this by a bullet whistling past. Behind, a tall, dark, mutilated, blackened château stood out, gaunt and still against the horizon, always the same. Week after week the only changes were brought about when it was hit by a few more shells.

Snatches of vaudeville songs floating out from the depths of dugouts merely accentuated the ridiculous predicament. The wonder at it all, the strangeness and the sadness became almost a pleasurable pain in time, much like the allurements cemeteries have for some people. Many a night, while out alone on one of the mud deserts that lay about us, I crawled into some charred relic of habitation, knelt down in a roofless room and prayed for deliverance, as I clutched at various tokens in my pockets that were dear to me.

It was in this frame of mind that I started to draw, and the trenches laughed.

THE BIRTH OF BILL

The drawings began, and out of the drawings stepped Old Bill much as the Fairy Godmother came to miserable Cinderella when she got turned down about going to the ball.

I am able to write this story of the creation of Old Bill from a perfectly aloof and unbiased standpoint.

It might be supposed that, as proprietor of this fictitious character, I would naturally write about him with pride and possibly an exaggerated sense of his importance. There are many comic characters in the cartoon world, and I have studied a good many of them. I want it to be clearly understood that I now talk of Old Bill in terms of strictly unbiased analysis, and without parental pride. I could write with equal impartiality about "Mutt and Jeff," "Jiggs" or "Andy Gump."

In the first place I have been called the creator of Old Bill. I think it more accurate to say that I edited Old Bill. As I have explained in a previous chapter, I found Old Bill before the war. When I began to feel the war, and all it meant to ordinary humanity, I saw that the mass frame of mind largely coincided with the frame of mind that I had seen in my early pre-war experiences while at work as an engineer.

Old Bill stood for a "frame of mind" which ran through countless thousands, yet to the world he is one real individual. Old Bill began on paper and was later transferred successfully to the stage and screen, where he gives the impression of a distinctly human and perfectly possible type. I feel more

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or less like a medium with regard to the creation of this character. Old Bill emerged out of my drawings, without my making any conscious endeavor to create a type. I have been as much amazed at the effect he has produced throughout the world as anybody, probably more than any one else.

Old Bill rarely laughs; he is always laughed at. This phase of character is common to many of the creations of comedy. He is invariably surrounded by the troubles of the world, and in his dim, dull, honest way tries to combat them. He spells honesty, loyalty and thickheaded endeavor. He is above all things just a simple human being, and I say these things not because it fell to me to create him, but because he is so, and there are millions like him in all parts of the world.

Most comic characters of the imagination have facial distortions which are impossibilities in life. With Old Bill this is not so. He is at all times just a slender exaggeration of not only a possibility but a fact.

I have frequently been asked the question, "Who was Old Bill?" I have had a lot of trouble explaining that there was no such person; that he was simply a hieroglyphic for a most prevalent type. Serious action had to be taken by my manager and legal advisers when a woman in England insisted that she was Old Bill's wife and claimed money for my use of her husband's physiognomy!

In various parts of the world and on countless occasions I have been told of some one that some one else knows who



What's that?
The Sergeant
callin'?



I knew that —
would fix on me
to fill them
sandbags



'Ooray! He's
picked out Bert
instead!

Pence. B.

THE BIRTH OF BILL

is "exactly like Old Bill." This I know to be fully possible, for I could take any one on a personally conducted tour round New York, London, Paris or Berlin, and find an "Old Bill" for him.

Now here I come to another curious point. I have mentioned Berlin. It has taken a few years for the allied countries at large to realize that the human story underlying the war was the same on both sides. While the war was still running and I was drawing my pictures, a letter reached me from a German officer. It had come from the German front via Germany and Russia and been finally delivered to me on the Western Front. It had been impossible to deliver this letter across "No Man's Land." So it had done a thousand miles instead of a few hundred yards. I have not the exact wording, but it was approximately this:

"Dear Captain Bairnsfather,

"This is to tell you that we feel the same as you do," etc.

One touch of nature "makes the whole world kin," and even that horror, the war, could not suppress the human nature that was enveloped in its meshes.

I never used a model for Bill. Wandering as I did up and down the front, and living in the very front row as it were, branded my mind with the types that mattered. To draw Bill, I simply felt his personality. If he was frowning in a picture, I would frown as I drew. If he laughed, I would laugh. An observer viewing me draw would have thought that the war had gone to my head.

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As Old Bill progressed and became a solid and established character, I started in to work out the best means of expressing on paper his different frames of mind. The drawn character passed through two stages of evolution:

- (A) From the pre-war character I had seen up to the same individual enveloped by a war.
- (B) The varying expressions brought about on Old Bill by various war experiences.

The page of drawings which goes with this chapter will illustrate my meaning.

The evolution of Old Bill necessitated the secondary evolution of two other characters to procure the right formation for carrying the tabloid stories. Bert and Alf made their appearance in the same manner as Old Bill. I now had a planet and a couple of moons, as it were.

Bill began slowly but steadily grew in favor. The popularity of the drawings depicting his troubles in the mud increased, and yet I am honestly glad to say that I felt only an editor of his exploits or possibly a sort of fisherman who had pulled a new kind of popular fish out of the sea of mud. Few people knew what anguish had been necessary to make me the editor of this character. Later on when I observed great numbers of people, as an inevitable result, cashing in on Bill in some shape or form, I felt that he had been able to do more things than create laughs for his fellow sufferers: he was making money for those in the world who

THE BIRTH OF BILL

perpetually wait for such fortuitous creations without any sympathy or understanding for the hardships of their origin.

All creators of popular, money-making "characters" must feel this way. Letters about Old Bill reached me from America, Australia, Africa, New Zealand, Germany, Russia, China and Canada, and also from a few other countries of minor degree. I have leaned against counters in countless bars and been riddled with questions about him. I have had his jokes quoted to me by taxi-drivers, stokers, miners, soldiers, policemen and every other kind of denomination. He still remains to me a puzzle I had the honor of extricating out of that strange retrogression of humanity, the war. And secretly I knew that all I had done was to clothe an ordinary, simple human being, whom I had seen and understood in pre-war days, with a mantle of khaki, and made him react to the uncomfortable surroundings brought about by the war.

CHAPTER V

RESPONSIBILITY

IT is commonly supposed that man, once engaged in any particular line of work, would like if possible to advance in that line. It might be conjectured that a private would naturally like to progress in his profession until he became a sergeant-major. A second lieutenant would surely like to rise to the position of general. This desire for promotion permeates a vast number of men, but there are exceptions, and Old Bill is, and always has been, one of them. At no time in the war did he ever want to be anything but a private. He even went so far as to refuse chances of advancement. A hasty and unthoughtful judgment might pronounce him a fool about this, but on closer inspection and having learned something about Old Billism you will see that there was much wisdom in his madness. I really think that if I ever have to go to another war I shall adopt Old Bill's plan: join as a private and take steps to remain one. If the next war is going to be a long war then the thing to do is to arrange to be as comfortable as you can under the circumstances, and one of the most important ingredients of war comfort is Lack of Responsibility.

RESPONSIBILITY

Sleep easy with everything arranged for you. The moment you become one of the people who has to arrange things for others, the anxiety and worry begin. Thousands, including myself, have fallen into the error of envying those above us in rank. We have done so on a mistaken surmise of either their superior comfort or their superior security from danger.

The carefree but uncomfortable buccaneer of the trenches had really a better time than any colonel.

Old Bill, in his dim way, instinctively knew this, and had all his mental barbed wire entanglements out against being made even a corporal.

Wealth, power and comfort are frequently attained at the loss of irresponsibility and an easy mind. Of course, these remarks go to the wall, if ambition and achievement are placed ahead of all things and regarded as comfortable possessions. But Old Bill suffered from neither of these complaints. He naturally desired to pass through the war with as little worry as possible. There was quite enough trouble to be found living in a trench and glaring over the sandbags in front, between battles and bullets, without sending out for more. The humble dweller in the cottage is often happier than the owner of the castle. The same sort of thing goes in war.

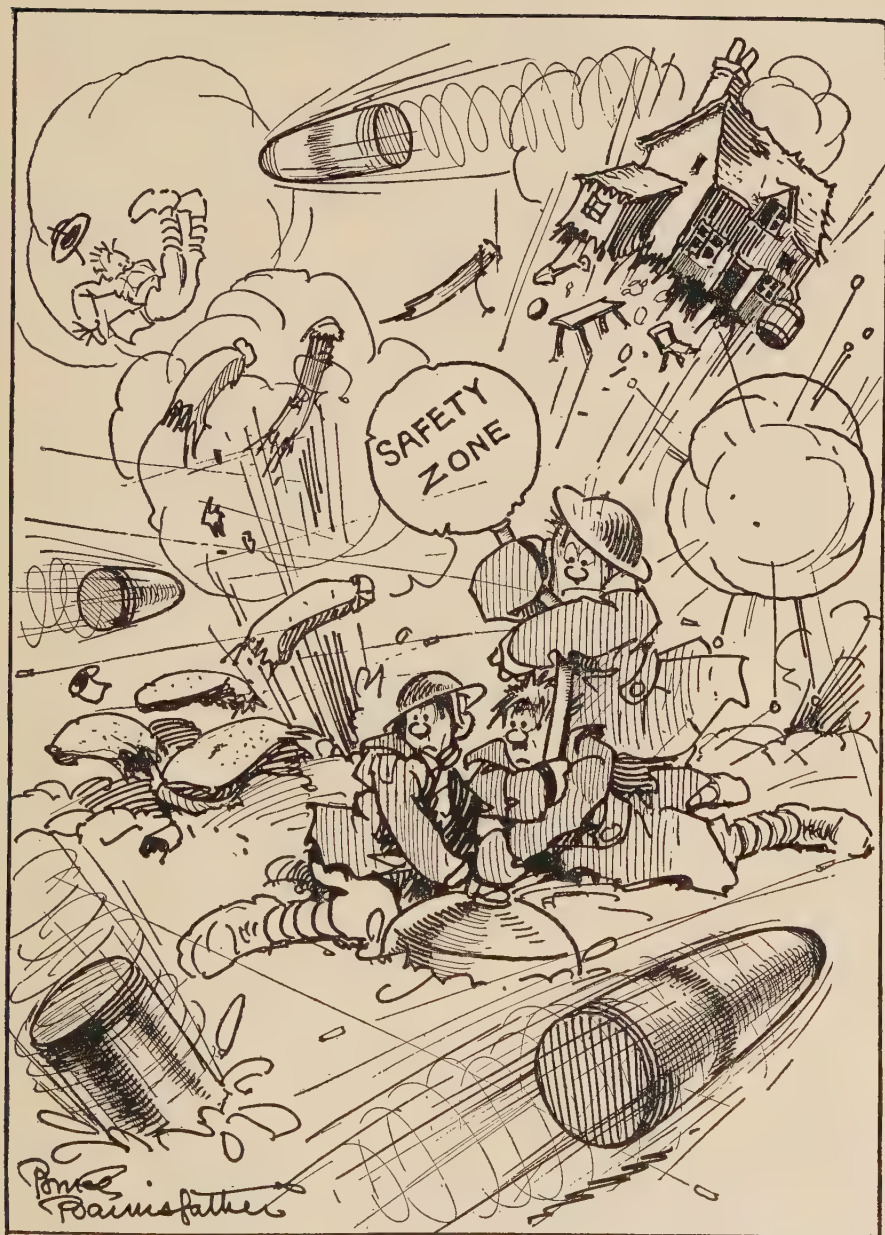
Old Bill allowed himself to be robbed of all responsibility. He was prepared to participate in anything that was arranged. He trusted to his superiors to run the war. His own responsibility ended at the circumference of an imag-

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inary circle, drawn with himself as center and with a radius of only a few yards. He had a sort of motherly watchfulness for Bert and Alf, and a kindly solicitude for his nearest officer. Having satisfied his conscience in this way, all that was left to be done was to make himself as comfortable as possible, both mentally and physically, until some one somewhere announced that the war was over. Sometimes in his long war career it happened that in the heat of battle or some form of anxiety he almost unconsciously distinguished himself and was threatened with being rewarded. This threat was most disconcerting. He secretly made up his mind that if he were made a corporal he would go and ask permission to have the honor canceled. He knew well what a corporal's job would be, and he looked ahead with positive horror at a further possible rise to sergeant.

Old Bill's billets were generally a barn or a loft, two or three miles behind the front-line trenches. Here he would wallow for a few days in the straw and the soiled military equipment, much like a hippopotamus at a zoo. During this period he would gossip, smoke and play cards and if possible omit to clean his rifle.

At last the night would arrive again when his battalion had to return to the trenches and relieve another on duty. Just before dusk the several companies would form up at some convenient spot in the village, and the officers having taken their places, the whole outfit would start off toward the trenches. A somewhat sullen, speechless community



Battles wouldn't be half so bad, if only they supplied safety zones where one could get a rest now and then

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they would be, too. The slush of boots in mud, the clinking of mess tins, and the creaking of equipment were the main sounds to be heard. As the trenches were approached, even these small noises had to be, if possible, suppressed. To me, taking over trenches was one of the most remarkably dangerous feats of the war. On these occasions it frequently happened that over a thousand men in groups, clusters and lines were on top of the ground, not more than two hundred yards from the German lines, and only protected by invisibility due to the darkness of night. A well timed and directed burst of machine-gun fire might have worked dreadful havoc, while the incoming battalion was about to enter, and the resident battalion was about to leave, the line of trenches. It must be remembered that there were trenches and trenches; later on in the war, approach was made safer and less visible. I have approached some trenches on the Yser Canal (while with the French Army) through an underground or rather undersand tunnel about a mile long. I am talking now, however, of the days when trenches were drains and men were amphibians.

Old Bill would arrive in the darkness and slide down into the worn and ramshackle depth of his allotted trench and hastily join in the scramble for ready-made dugouts. He knew so well that if there were not enough to go round, and he missed a seat, there was a good chance of spending the next two hours making a dugout, under the, by now, bad-tempered eye of the sergeant. Having cornered a

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berth, he would then occupy his mind with an endeavor to mesmerize all authority into leaving him alone. The danger of being given something to do at this moment was very great. He might be made a sentry right away, told to go a quarter of a mile and fetch a hundred empty sandbags, make a dugout, or bale the mud out of the bottom of the trench. Any one of those jobs failed to appeal to Bill in the pleasurable and patriotic way that they should.

Of course, as I describe these scenes and Old Bill's predicament it must be remembered that it is pouring rain all the time. This will make it easier for you to put the right words into Bill's mouth when he gathers half an hour later that he has to go on sentry duty at midnight, and, until then, dig a sap out into the field in front for a machine-gun emplacement. He discovers at this moment also that there is no coke for a fire, and the rum hasn't come up. It is necessary now for him mentally to page Buddha and turn on as much of his Nirvana as possible, "the attainment of self-centered composure of being." But great as are these trials, Bill realizes he has no responsibility. He can just allow himself to be used, and focus his inner mind on Nirvana, coming out of this delectable trance only when the great news flashes along the trenches that the rum has at last come up.

Meanwhile, mess waiters are laying the tables, and cooks are cooking back at General Headquarters. Generals are finishing up work preparatory to dinner. Staff officers are

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chatting and smoking, all is brightness in their neighborhood, but Bill doesn't envy them. Now and again he may say: "What about us poor devils in this 'ere muck, whilst them there blinkin' orficers sits at the back, 'avin a good time, eh?" But in his heart he knows better; he's missed something they are stuck with—RESPONSIBILITY.

CHAPTER VI

NOW THEN! GET ON WITH THE WAR

THERE was one phase of the war that Old Bill felt was getting things back more as they should be, and that was the remarkable interlude that occurred round about Christmas Day, 1914.

A self-ordained truce came to pass for the length of about a mile between the two opposing front-line trenches. Germans and British mixed together freely, and, just at that spot and time, the Great War stopped. Had it not been for Authority behind, it would never have gone on again, at least not at that particular place.

Both Old Bill and I participated in this curious episode.

Christmas was approaching, as I have said. Old Bill, Bert and Alf found themselves in a remarkably humid and uncomfortable trench that straggled across a one-time turnip field, slightly north of Plugstreet Wood, and facing the little town of Messines. The opposing German trenches were, as far as could be ascertained, equally unattractive. The distance across No Man's Land was, from Old Bill to Old Fritz, about one hundred and fifty yards. By an un-

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fortunate schedule, it had become apparent that Old Bill's battalion would spend Christmas in the trenches. There were others more fortunate, whose schedule would enable them to spend Christmas behind the line. Old Bill, however, was a philosopher by now, or, even more, a fakir. He looked annoyed, but said nothing. I think he had mentally prepared himself for many a Christmas spent this way.

The afternoon of the twenty-fourth of December found him coiled up in the mixture of straw and slime at the bottom of his dugout. In front of him was an old and battered fire briquet, on which a mixture of rum and tea was warming. In his muddy war-worn fingers, which emerged from fingerless gloves, he held a letter which he was laboriously reading with a puzzled frown. Bill was never strong on literature. The letter had just arrived, for letters did arrive at the trenches at irregular intervals, depending largely on the danger-dodging capacity of the postman. Sniping a Yuletide postman sounds most unkind, but things like that would happen now and then. The letter was from Old Bill's wife, Maggie, who had strange ideas on what might interest Bill. It ran like this:

Dear Bill

I hope this finds you as it leaves me quite well. Cyril has got the hooping cough ever so bad [Bill had wished for whooping-cough or anything many a time as a respite from the trenches] and we had the doctor and I paid for a bottle of tonic what he told us about, out of the money I got for

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them statues on the mantelpiece, what you didn't like, and I sold to Mrs. Cooper. Pore old Mrs. Henderson next door died a fortnight ago come next Tuesday and the way Mr. Henderson has been going on ever since is awfil. He's been drunk most days and got the push from the China works, so his sister come to me and sez as how her cousin as had a baby and don't know what to do [Bill read this social complication over several times and finally gave it up.] Aint this war awfil, they is all sayin about here how it will go on for years. The parson come the other day and sez his daughter was sending you a pair of socks just because he didn't go next door but one Mrs. Hornblower sez as how she'll never speak to me again. I don't care. If I was to say all I knows about her she wouldnt like it I know you know what I mean Bill, about her and that traveler for the Brewery. I hope you got that there parcil I sent you with the tobacco and the choclote what Fanny give me after that fire at the grocers. Take care of yerself and hurry up with the war for my sake.

Your loving wife

Maggie

We opened Douglasses money box and there was only two shillin and threepence and he sez you must have took the rest did ye?

It is very irritating to be left with a question at the end of a letter, particularly when it is a nasty insinuation and you can not answer it for a week or so. Bill folded up this epistle with a scowl. He loved the letter; it was from Maggie. To him the contents were all sufficient, but that last line caused him to conjure up a scene of what might happen to Douglas on his return. What if he had borrowed

This is what the
Theatre and Motion
Picture has taught
you to think was
the sort of thing
You found at
the Billets



My Billet always
seemed to have
this sort



Price
Pamphlet

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five shillings from the money box? Wasn't he going to put it back out of his pay? He slashed at an imaginary Douglas with a rusty bayonet used for poking the fire.

"What's the matter with you, Bill?" came Bert's voice from a dugout across the way. "Somethin' bittin' ya?"

"You mind yer own business," barked out Old Bill, adding in a most superior voice, "It's somethin' you couldn't h'understand Bert, some financial business, what I'm h'interested hin back 'ome."

A smothered laugh could be heard from the recesses of Bert's dugout, in which Alf's share could be easily detected. Bill paid no attention but angrily set to work carving mud from his boots with the before-mentioned bayonet. The day wore on in silence. Not a single shot could be heard, not even the distant booming of guns. A perfectly clear sky was overhead, and the entire zone seemed peculiarly still.

"Christmas Eve," Old Bill thought to himself and as he did so visioned the last one. He was in a little room in a midland town, gaily lighted with cheap, colored candles, a small Christmas tree in the center. He remembered how Maggie had run round and brought him back from his favorite public house to see Cyril get his pair of roller skates. He remembered the three terrible days that followed Christmas when Douglas was thought to have appendicitis, until it proved that he had simply over-eaten himself on toffee. All these sweet memories came back, as he gazed

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up at the cerulean sky of this Christmas Eve at Plugstreet Wood.

The afternoon slowly melted into evening and evening on into a silent night. A sense of strangeness was in the air. As for myself, I came out of my dugout and sloshed along the trench to a dry lump, stood on it, and gazed at all the scene around: the stillness, the stars, and the now dark blue sky. It was on such a night as this that artists throughout the ages have insisted Christ was born. From where I stood I could see our long line of zigzagging trenches, and those of the Germans as well. Songs began to float up from various parts of our line. Not far away from me a roughly assembled choir in which Bill, Bert and Alf were members began a well-worn trench song, as thoroughly associated with soldiers as "Yo! ho! ho! and a bottle of rum" is with pirates. It was invariably sung within earshot of sergeants.

"Who stole the rum last night?
Who stole the rum last night?
Was it the Sergeant who stole the jar?
Ah-ah ah-ha—ah, ha—, ha ha!
Who stole the rum last night,
Out in the pale moonlight?
I'm going to tell the colonel, when I get home,
Who stole the rum last night."

The song died away on the frosty air, and its place was taken by a distant mouth organ. I passed along the trench on a friendly visit to another dugout and came on a group of

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men in most excited-looking positions, looking over the parapet.

"What's up?" I asked.

"They're singin'!" came the reply.

"Who are singing?"

"The Boches, sir, you can 'ear 'em quite plain. There's a feller over there shoutin' in English, and one of 'em's got a concertina or something."

I was flooded with assorted information. We all stood still and listened. Yes, there it was again! From the German trenches, which we now could see, came the refrain of *Deutschland Ueber Alles*, accompanied by a concertina. This was followed by shouts from our trenches, shouts in response from the German lines. After long months of silent antagonism the effect was most peculiar.

I turned and went back to my dugout to tell my officer pal who shared it with me. Bill, Bert and Alf knew all about it by this time. Wireless is a tortoise for speed, compared with trench news. The trio had got along to where the greatest interest seemed to be focused, and were lustily engaged in shouting various jokes at the Germans, in the hope of hearing replies.

Suddenly a voice came out of the darkness across No Man's Land. "Come over here," it said.

"Come over yerself," barked Old Bill.

Before one could quite realize the situation and take the necessary steps of discipline to insure a continuous state of

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war, some one, and I fear it was Old Bill, had got out into the shadows of No Man's Land and met a German who had gone to meet him. Later that night, thinking the strange episode closed, I observed Bert with a curious-looking packet of cigarettes bearing a Teutonic title, and saw Alf with a foreign-looking uniform button. Peering into Old Bill's dugout I saw his "souvenir": a gray and red German cloth cap with two buttons on the front. Under the circumstances I felt investigation of these peculiarities would be better conducted in the morning. I turned into my dugout, and fitting myself in with my fellow officer, much like a pair of boots in a cardboard box, went to sleep.

I awoke at dawn, and on emerging on all fours from my dugout, became aware that the trench was practically empty. I stood upright in the mud and looked over the parapet. No Man's Land was full of clusters, and groups of khaki and gray were pleasantly chatting together.

English and German soldiers were actually fraternizing on Christmas morning! Old Bill, of course, was in the thick of it. I think the Germans wondered what sort of animal he might be. He was wearing a greatcoat that looked as if rats had dined off the bottom, a huge muffler, a balaclava woolen helmet, with a battered khaki hat perched on the top, and fingerless gloves. To German eyes it must have seemed a curious uniform, quite apart from an examination of Bill's face from a military standpoint. Old Bill, accompanied by Bert, Alf and a few friends had surrounded a

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group of three or four Germans, and both groups were staring at each other with amused curiosity. The sound of German conversation seemed to give Bill a great laugh.

"What a damn silly language!" was Old Bill's comment, as a German launched out into a lengthy question about something which nobody understood.

"Sounds like they're garglin'," said Bert.

I noticed these things about the two opposing sides:

- (1) The Germans looked cleaner and dryer;
- (2) The English more jocular and happier in demeanor;
- (3) Some of the German soldiers seemed bashful and sullen;
- (4) There was a total lack of suspicion on both sides; nobody was armed;
- (5) None of our soldiers could talk German; one or two of the German soldiers could talk English.

It was truly an amazing scene. Not only were the crowds moving about and chatting in No Man's Land, but the parapets of both sides were lined with men, now exposed in a way which would have been suicidal two days before. There was no hate, and yet not exactly friendliness. Just as electricity, on reaching a certain point of charge, will leap between two metallic knobs when they are close enough together, so something had leaped across this space of No Man's Land. Electricity is positive and negative. This was English and German electricity. Sir John French and

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Hindenburg could not have done this thing. King George and the Kaiser could not have done it. With Bill and Fritz alone was it possible.

Of course, it was too much to expect that a table would be suddenly wheeled out into No Man's Land, accompanied by English and German Ministers with fountain pens and documents, ready to sign PEACE. No, that unfortunately did not happen. The end of our Christmas party came all too speedily, when instructions were received that all fraternization must cease, and the war be proceeded with immediately. I found on getting back to my trench that my captain was annoyed about it all. Our colonel was annoyed about it. And so on, up, and back to Divisional Headquarters, officers were more and more annoyed about it, and the desire for this friendliness to stop at once was firmly expressed. Christmas Day having passed, and the respective soldiers having been sorted out, and put back in their proper slots in the ground, the war went on again. Bullets whizzed across that one-time meeting place, and sundry participants in that social gathering were laid out stiff on parapets, awaiting burial at dusk.

CHAPTER VII

A REALLY GOOD BATTLE

THERE are battles and battles, but right here I want to give an outline of one of the largest and most expensive kind. In the Great War there were many small attacks but few large genuine battles, compared to the length of time the whole show ran. A modern battle is an awesome spectacle, and also a sadly humorous spectacle. I very much doubt whether the battles of previous wars ever got into such a mess. Standing shoulder to shoulder in a square, dressed in bright red, while cannon balls rolled across the grounds toward you,—that sort of thing can not be compared to a really first class modern battle. I have been to a few and after painful researches can give a rough summary of the general effects common to most battles. Particularly in the early days before the subsequent improved efficiency crept into the war.

The whole thing starts by a rumor that there is going to be one. The preparations are almost impossible to conceal. You become aware that a vast gathering of troops is occurring. You either see this for yourself or hear about it. A hallucination exists that it is all very secret and that the

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enemy are going to be surprised. As a matter of fact, in nine cases out of ten the enemy are perfectly aware of your plans and are also "secretly" arranging for a clotted heap of men and guns to be exactly opposite the place where you are going to attack. The only way to combat the inevitable "dead-on" clash is to change the plans at the last minute. Through weeks of preparation the atmosphere gets slowly more intense. Officers discuss the possibilities, sergeants repeat all they overhear, privates hope that a really good battle may lead to leave, or to a comfortable wound, which again may lead to the Base.

After months in front-line trenches one likes the idea of a battle for a change. The idea connotes movement, action and possible adventure. The main symptoms that appear before a battle starts are easily recognizable after a little practise. A group of enormous guns will arrive from somewhere else and be accidentally met crawling toward the scene of the forthcoming encounter at about the speed of a paralyzed turtle. They are slashed about with various pastel tints in the fond hope that they can not be seen. High overhead a tiny speck of an aeroplane has started off back to the opposition with a story of exactly where these guns are. Masses of men are collecting from other sectors and start overcrowding your billets. Large motor-cars flash up and down the roads in all directions, carrying staff officers with maps and plans for luncheon at other distant points. Instructions begin to percolate down from the higher spheres



There are times when jokes can be in very bad taste

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of thought. You realize that the great general who commands the Something or Other Army to which you belong is about to "deliver an attack" (or have one delivered against him before he is ready).

You are just one of say five hundred thousand men. There is nothing for you to do but go in with the general on the scheme. You can't chat it over with him and persuade him out of it. He's got you screwed into his plot, and you might as well make the best of it. Even though you could not cancel the battle, you would welcome a chat with the general. Generals always live in such nice houses, about five miles back.

At last larger and clearer orders come through, and it is known to everybody that the Something or Other Army under General Sir Godfrey Cumbersome, V. C., is going to strike a "decisive blow" at the line running from the village of Pomme-de-Terre to the canal south of Mal-de-Mer and thereby remove the salient which is the first step toward a general advance all along the line. It all sounds fine. The great plan begins. Hundreds of thousands of men are moved around and shifted about. Marches are conducted through the night. Thousands plod along boggy roads before the dawn, cursing, swearing, and now in a mood to welcome any battle anywhere, for a rest.

Suddenly as we stumble along in the darkness you and yours have to crush aside into a ditch, as a large car, some horse artillery or a herd of crawling howitzers want to pass

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in the opposite direction. The whole thing looks like one vast incomprehensible tangle. Nobody of your acquaintance knows where you are all going. The exact details are only known to a few, and what little knowledge you have is more often than not shortly removed by the arrival of entirely new counter-instructions. The whole thing now consists of some huge unintelligible plan bathed in darkness and rain. Somewhere up at the top of the business is General Sir Godfrey Cumbersome and his Staff, and you trust to them.

It is generally at this moment that the news comes that the enemy who "must have guessed our intention" has struck at the now weakened line twelve miles north of Pomme-de-Terre and broken through.

Then the fireworks begin! The original plan, which took four months to arrange in detail, is now worth two cents. The whole circus has to be ready to do things that have never been explained, go to places that have never been dreamed of and march in the opposite direction. Colonels, captains and sergeants start roaring orders. The rain gets worse. The enemy are found to be nearer than at first thought and show every sign of attacking from where you thought least likely. The dawn is beginning to break. The sound of a fearful barrage breaks out somewhere in front. In a wild rush in some vague direction ordered by a stranger you find yourself in a field studded with shell holes and barbed wire, next to some one belonging to a regiment totally different from your own. You now realize that a

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colossal battle is in full swing. Shells start bursting in every conceivable direction, and a cloud of black and red dust tells you that it is highly likely that the attack is centering round that village out in front, though what village it is nobody knows. At this point, in order to get a clearer impression of what a battle really means, it is advisable not to worry about the unintelligible events you see around you, but to wait until such time as you can (if still alive) read about it in the press. The account rarely seems to portray adequately your own feelings in the matter. It generally reads like this:

“The attempt on the part of the enemy to break through north of Pomme-de-Terre was frustrated with heavy loss.”

P. S. That “general advance all along the line” is not mentioned again.

CHAPTER VIII

THIS WAR BUSINESS

TO BE a true, hundred per cent. soldier, it is obvious that you must be a man willing to kill other men or be killed. Polishing buttons, saluting and parading are only accessory accomplishments. Your real true vocation is to be ready at all times, when called upon, to kill or be killed. That is your real art. A multiplication of your type means an army. Sometimes the strength of an army can procure the desired results without killing, but, granted certain opposition, it has no other resource than to kill. The individual soldier gets a free pass to commit murder, simply because the power to which he belongs disputes the right or ambitions of an opposing power. Killing by soldiers in a war frequently approaches the typical peace-time murder in style, and it has to. Sniping was greatly in vogue in the late war. The best marksmen were used on both sides to stalk and shoot to kill, when no particular battle was on. This was perfectly allowable in the war.

On a still quiet morning a sniper would crawl along, using any available cover, until he reached some point of

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vantage, and would shoot some careless member of the opposition as he showed his head above the parapet. This could happen on a quiet sunlit summer's morning when not a sound of warfare could be heard for miles. Only the condition of war prevailed. The same performance, if conducted outside the war zone, and without the passport which uniform provides, would be called murder.

England was at war with Germany. An Englishman "at the front" could snipe Germans in their trenches as much as he pleased. That was "fighting."

If an Englishman in London entered a restaurant with a rifle, crawled from table to table unobserved, until he got a good view of the German headwaiter behind the cold ham, and then shot him dead, he would be arrested for murder.

To enunciate a still more peculiar form of this same problem, consider Armistice Day. The war stopped at a certain precise moment. To club a surprised German on the head with the butt end of a rifle a minute before that moment would be a legitimate act of war. A minute after, it would be murder.

War, therefore, as a profession is better not inquired into too deeply. It is better to stop off at the admiration of uniform, medals and parades. It joins those other difficult problems of the human race, such as the weakness we have for petting dogs and eating sheep, fostering canaries and killing chickens.

Once in the war I went out on a sniping expedition and

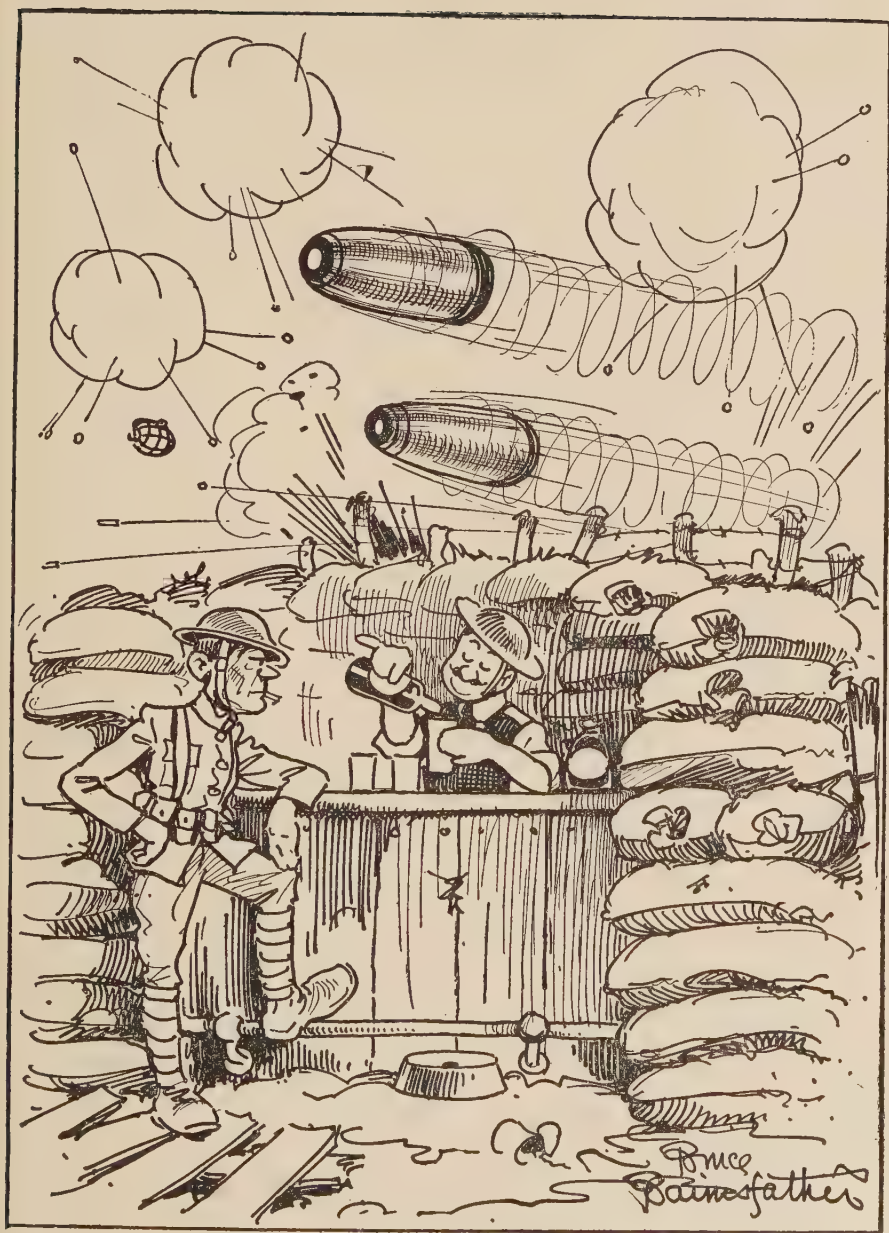
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nearly got sniped myself. I am particularly glad now, however, on looking back, that I missed the target, or rather was forced to miss the target. It was a painful little episode.

During a long and depressing lull in affairs, south of Ypres, sniping became quite the thing. The Germans had knocked us about a lot at this game, and we were instructed to retaliate as much as possible. One damp morning, feeling more adventurous and soldierlike than usual, I decided to have a snipe at some one if I could. I feel ashamed of this sporting desire now, but had a barbaric tingle in my veins about it then. I crawled out of our trenches and pursued a slow and laborious path toward a spot of vantage as near the German trenches as I could find.

There was an old shelled-out farm building between the lines, and I felt that, once there and esconced in the roof, I could get a good dominating view of the German trenches at close range. It was all most exciting. I fancy big game hunters must feel the same way.

I crawled into the farmyard and then quietly scrambled up into the roof of the barn and gazed out between the broken tiles. There were the German trenches quite close before me, and not a soul to be seen. I waited with a heart palpitating like a suction pump and silently looked my rifle over to see that all was set. After a considerable pause I observed a shovel being operated by an invisible being,—evidently some one removing mud from the bottom of the trench. I gripped my rifle tighter and waited.



Little things like this would brighten up the next war a lot

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At last a head showed up above the parapet. A typical German soldier head. A young blond. Suddenly my war-like engines seemed to reverse within me. Here was this poor wretch just as enveloped in a war as I was, standing there, totally quiet and harmless for the moment, unconscious of my bloodthirsty design. I thought of some home far off in Germany. I could see letters from that home, folded up and faded in his pocket. I could see the news arriving at that home later, that Cannon Fodder Number 10256678 X had been killed. I realized I would not only be sniping him but possibly murdering a group of distant hearts. I hesitated, then wildly fired a nervous and unaimed shot which probably hit nothing in particular.

My punishment for this atrocity came in this world, instead of waiting for the next.

Before I had time to slip down to the floor from the beam I was on, a shell came over from behind the German lines and exploded in the courtyard of the farm. This was followed rapidly by another that crashed into the roof. I suddenly felt an overwhelming desire for an early peace. The farm was evidently an object of suspicion, for the rapidity of the shelling spelled preparation. I left the place with a velocity few retreats can have achieved and, regaining my dugout, coiled myself up in the mud again with a heart action that sounded like a riveting machine. I missed that Teuton in his trench but still feel guilty of having contemplated his destruction. My only defense is that war ordered

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these things and that back in England vast numbers of clergymen throughout the land were praying for the king to be able to vanquish all his enemies!

These few words on the art of killing now brings me to a problem which has never to my mind been faced as it should be. It is a problem which will burst out again with additional angles in the next war.

The problem is: "Are there limits to the various methods of destruction?"

I happened to be present at the first gas attack in the war. I remember the wave of indignation that spread against the Germans. An idea seemed to be prevalent that this was not playing the game. But can war be classed as a game? It seems to me that, with the serious nature of this periodical complaint the world has called war, it is vital for one side or the other to win as soon as possible, and naturally to do so by any means possible. The shorter the war the better for humanity. You feel your cause to be just and you set to in deadly earnest to make it prevail. You don't stand on punctilio. You must grab at any weapon. War can not be enveloped with restraining rules like boxing. It is absurd to look upon the introduction of gas as a terrible and outrageous move.

The approved system of plunging bayonets into your enemies is no more refined a method of gaining one's point.

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War is a terrible thing. It must use terrible things. No amount of prohibiting and fastidious regulation can remove the dirt from this horrible and degrading business. If the world could combine to stop war—all right; but as it can not, it is better to admit that whoever is in one, is out to win by any means available. Personally, if I am ever called upon to go to another, I would much prefer to have gas squirted at me from a distance, to being treated like a pin cushion. To those who think gas a horrible and monstrous liberty taken with the art of war, I would like to add the following objectionable features for their attention. Besides not liking gas we never got infatuated with twelve-inch shells, hand grenades or bombs. We never felt enthusiastic about being blown into the air by a mine. We always thought being mowed down like hay by a machine gun was unattractive. In fact, now that we look back that gas business was rather good. Suicides frequently choose it.

Having relieved myself of these reveries on nastiness, I find myself dreaming of the ideal form of soldier.

There is somewhere or other a man whom, say, a board of generals would call the "perfect soldier," and I should just like to see that man or, better still, see the "perfect soldier" of before-the-war days and along with him the kind of man who would be deemed the perfect soldier now. There are fashions in warfare, and they change as fashions do. The "perfect soldier" of 1814 had to be a different thing from the perfect soldier of 1914; but now, what is the perfect

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soldier of 1927? What has war evolution brought out as a type?

When we see a regiment of big, healthy, strong bronzed men marching down a road, we are still apt to say, "What splendid soldiers!" But somehow or other I feel we are out of date when we say that. Wide open, moving, he-man wars want that kind of man, but the latest developments in warfare are of such an inartistic, mechanical, mathematical and chemical nature that big, strong, bronzed fellows look a bit out of place in it to me.

Instead, we ought to watch a regiment march past of armor-plated, gas-fed chemists with natural fins on them for trench swimming (each carrying a book of logarithms) and cheer them to the echo! "Gee! aren't they a great bunch of boys!" shouts the stenographer from the fourteenth-floor window. "Look at that one over there with that gas mask and box of compasses! Ain't he just the sweetest thing!" You don't want to be bronzed and strong, no sir; just as pale and weak as you like, but you must be able to live on gas, and understand the darn tools they give you to use.

I have watched with pain the terrible change that has crept over armies since the war. Those good old days of courageous dumbbells for soldiers are over. The big, fine, good-looking, Guards-brained officer, a wonderful man in his way, seems passing out of the war business in favor of a gas-withstanding mathematician. In the English Army at any rate this change is slowly taking place. That wonderful

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type we had at Mons is disappearing. I saw it disappearing in the war. As the years passed, the high-caste, feudal-evolved officers got killed in such numbers that officers were hastily constructed out of anything. This new crowd were not so good but knew more and in many ways were more suitable to the rotten sort of thing that war developed into. The use of the air has bred a new type, the flying officer. The trenches with all the H. G. Wells-like tanks, caterpillars, machine guns and intricate means of destruction have also bred a new type. The question arises, is there a place left in the business for the old-style soldier and officer; and I fear there is, just as in spite of submarines and sea planes there is a place still left for Dreadnought battle-ships. This is unfortunate for that old-type man, for the poor wretch is now thrust into an environment for which nature has not properly evolved him. It's as hard for him as for a soft shell crab in a pin factory. When, and if, this type of man leaves warfare, the whole beauty of the thing will have gone.

As an officer, you have got to know something nowadays, and that is a terrible detriment to good looks and romance. It is very hard indeed for the pre-war brand of officer, who simply knew drill, games, honor and courage. The technique of pre-war army life was childish compared with that of to-day. Even Napoleon could have done no better than Foch if faced with that Western Front. He probably would not have done so well. Anyway, he couldn't

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have pulled that Napoleon stuff out there. Standing on top of a pile of sandbags, using a Mussolini face, with one hand tucked into the middle of his waistcoat, would have been no use at all! On the face of it, the pre-war officer is out of place, as I said before, and yet he has got something that can never be dispensed with, something that must never leave war whatever it gets like. That quality is best described by saying that he is the man men will follow, stick to, and "go down with the ship" with.

Soldiers prefer a courageous, dull sportsman whom they can rely on, to the cleverest book type officer that ever walked. If charging the enemy physically is to be retained as an ingredient in war, then that poor courageous athlete who isn't clever enough to yield ground, must be retained. Of course the really perfect mechanical war of the future may do away with the necessity of having human beings utilized in it at all. Once upon a time, men and women did work which is now entirely done by machinery. Let us hope we can come to a time when we can run wars entirely by machinery. Let the machines go to it and scrap it out the best way they can. We'll come around later in a limousine and see how they get on. I'm all for winding up a bunch of machines, put them on board at the docks, wave them good-by, then wait to hear what happens. Human beings are out of place in a modern battle-field. We haven't got the necessary protective arrangements evolved on us yet. Turtles and rhinoceri are more suited to it.

This man always
bemoaned the
fate that
had designed
him this way



Yet it was this very
trouble that saved
his life at the
battle of
Crêpe-de-Chine



Ponce B.

Is this sort of thing, Luck or Predestination

THIS WAR BUSINESS

The protective covering for soldiers is not relatively so good now as it was in the days of armor. Armor was more a match for an arrow or a lance than a khaki tunic is for a shell. Private tanks all round are the least we should have. Here we are, at present, little juicy lumps which get punctured and dented far too easily. Shells, bullets and bayonets get in on us all the time.

CHAPTER IX

COURAGE

FAITH, Hope and Charity are three good things to have about you in peace time, but if a war comes along, it is as well to add Health, Strength and Courage. This latter trio are essential in war and come in very handy in peace as well. Courage, out of the whole lot of these attributes, seems to be the most difficult to analyze and discuss. It wants such tolerance and fairness to pronounce opinions on the varying degrees of courage to be found in different individuals.

There is the strong man's courage,

The frail man's courage,

The dull man's courage and

The clever man's courage;

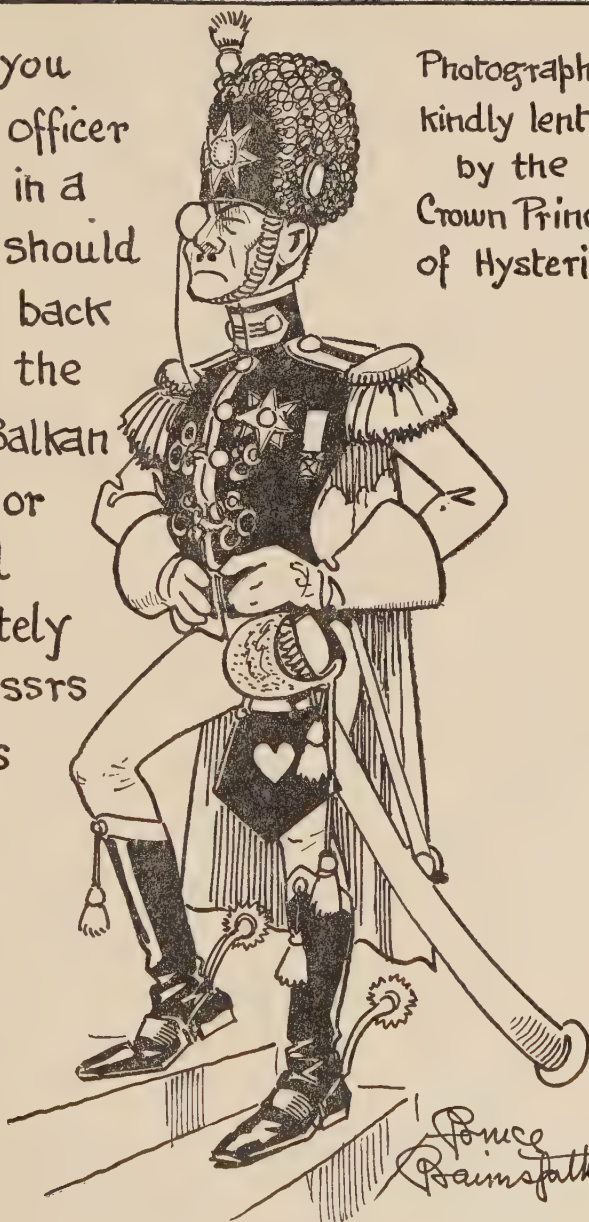
The courage of the imaginative man and

The courage of the material-minded, local-brained man.

You can study the courage ratios of all these types, and I think it will be found that after doing so, with as much thoughtful justice as is humanely possible, it is unwise to arrive at any set standard to apply universally to human beings in a modern war.

If ever you
find an officer
like this in a
war, he should
be sent back
C.O.D. to the
nearest Balkan
state, or
returned
immediately
to the Messrs
Shubert's
Musical
Comedy
Dept.

Photograph
kindly lent
by the
Crown Prince
of Hysteria





COURAGE

There were men who ran away in the Great War. There were men who lagged behind in that war, but yet I hesitate to blame them. The courage demanded on occasion was so colossal and they possibly had reached their limits, and who knows who or what was responsible for those limits. Commanders of armies naturally can not allow themselves to think like this. Fear is a most catching disease in a war. It is the commander's duty to make courage a catching disease. I think possibly the highest form of courage is to overcome fear when alone and unsupported by example or admiration. When it is realized that there were men who blew their fingers and toes off and here and there committed suicide rather than return to certain trenches, the magnitude of the courage required can be grasped. One should be proud to admit the possession of great fear if on top of it one is able to superimpose courage.

On a very large and painful scale courage and fear at times could be compared to "waiting to dive into a very cold swimming bath." I remember that two minutes before I had to go over the top in the second battle of Ypres, fear had reduced me to something that was past the trembling stage. I was quiet and sounded all right, but internally felt like a vacuum of terror. Once over the top and in the whirl of action and the bullet-laden atmosphere, this feeling seemed to leave me. I had a sort of frenzied sensation that nothing could hit me, and yet it was accompanied by my feeling as though I were already dead, or were standing on

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

the dividing line between life and death and able to look both ways. It was at this terrible battle that a strange case of courage came under my notice.

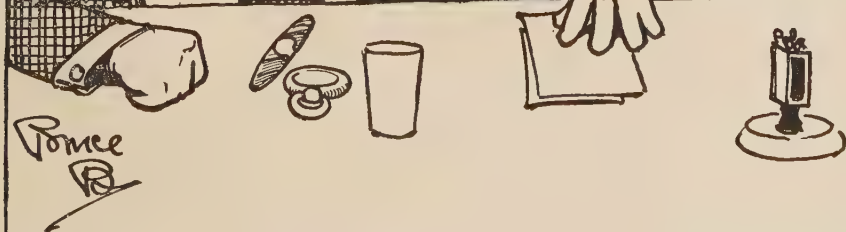
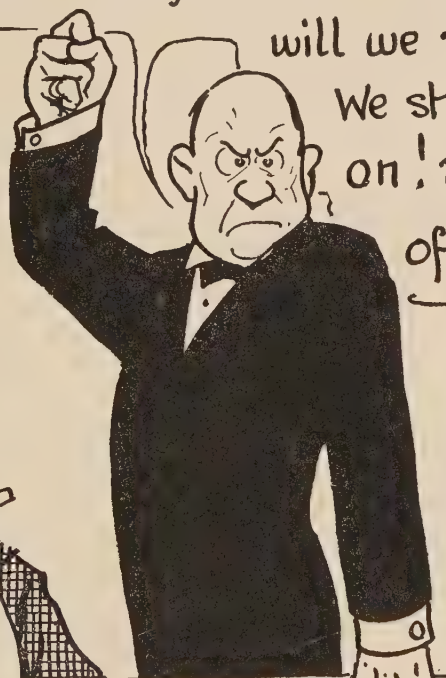
A few weeks before my regiment was in the trenches facing the Messines Ridge south of Kemal.

Now at this period of the war, comparatively early as it was, England was already beginning to run out of junior officers of the regulation, trained kind. The original regular army had been so knocked about and the mortality among officers so great that it was necessary for the authorities to consider the best means of increasing the supply of junior officers. The army was also increasing in size, which made this need more imperative still. Instructions came out that non-commissioned officers, i. e., sergeants and sergeant-majors were to be given a chance to become second lieutenants. Now it is necessary at this point to describe a peculiar trait in the make-up of the British Regular Soldier, a trait which was of course much more prevalent before the war and during the early stages of it than it is now. He liked what is commonly known as a "gentleman" for his officer, some one who did not spring from his own stratum of society. He followed him with a greater confidence. He preferred a sporting gentleman who knew little to one his piercing eye told him did not come from a "superior" class, however much he knew.

In other words, as a mass the regular soldier was not democratic in mind when it came to the selection of his

Gentlemen! we shall push forward
whatever it may cost us! Not one yard
will we retire!

We shall push
on! regardless
of everthing



This is the man I want to take with me
next time, right at the start, and fix him
up with a nice front seat in a Barrage

COURAGE

officers. In spite of the inroads of democracy it is surprising what a smoldering fire of the feudal system of thought still lies underneath.

A certain sergeant there was in my regiment at this time, and a great sergeant he was too; a fine sample of that marvelous, courageous, loyal band, who make sergeants the world over. He was admired and obeyed by his platoon with confidence and a sense of comfort. His personality was everywhere; his tireless strength and courage were perpetually in evidence throughout those long dreary days and nights of danger and discomfort. He was the support and comfort of his officers and of his men. The time came when the offer was officially made him to become a second lieutenant. Frequently he came to me and discussed this offer, of which I could see he was secretly very proud. He was debating in his mind whether to take it or not. The reason for his hesitation was that, on weighing the financial pros and cons and taking into consideration certain monetary necessities connected with a wife and family back home, he felt he might be worse off as an officer because of the increased ratio of expenses as compared with the increase of pay. However, not long after, he made up his mind. He became a second lieutenant and entered the ranks of commissioned officers. Then the trouble began, that strange trouble which can be removed only by pure genuine democracy (I wonder if it really exists anywhere). He had to approach and treat those same men from a different angle. They knew his

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

origin and at every possible turn found opportunities to let him know they knew. He found it harder to make them obey. He found it impossible to get the respect that an inferior officer of different social class could easily procure.

He, I knew, was secretly depressed. In his heart he realized that he was the victim of a strange psychology he could not understand and yet knew was there. It would take a most shrewd and tireless observer to unravel the mind workings of the "Bills," "Berts" and "Alfs" of the army on a matter like this.

The second battle of Ypres came along, and in the heart of this new officer who had risen from a sergeant was the sense that after all courage proves you to men, above all else in hours of tribulation. In a wild forlorn attack on the German trenches, when the hail of machine gun fire had prevented any possible chance of reasonable advance without annihilation, he dashed out ahead of everybody into the leaden storm.

Several times wounded as he ran, he reached the German parapet, tottered, revolver in hand, on the top, and was last seen hooked down beyond the sandbags by a succession of bayonet thrusts.

What kind of courage was that?

Anyway, that is a true story of a sergeant who "carried on."

CHAPTER X

FROM FRONT TO FRONT

AT THIS same second battle of Ypres in April of 1915, during the progress of the vague massacre that was proceeding I collided with a shell, and in due course found myself on a stretcher, with a label tied to the lapel of my tunic, being shipped over to England. When repaired, I was put on duty again, but this time in England, as was the custom in those days. After a variety of "back of the front" jobs, I found myself again out in France, only now as a captain. I was promoted from a lieutenant, after that affair at Ypres, which has often made me wonder whether promotion has anything to do with how high you are blown from the ground. Possibly the "General Staff" or the "Inner Intelligence" or whoever they may be, have worked out a ratio between shells and promotion.

Say five feet means second lieutenant to lieutenant;

Ten feet (with nose dive into duck pond), lieutenant to captain, etc., etc.

After the battle of the Somme when I had to retire from the conflict for the second time, I little realized that my days

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as a front-line soldier were over. I suddenly got a summons from the War Office to report there. I have examined only one war office closely, and that was the British. I had considerable time to size up the War Office in my own way and found for myself many points of interest. I feel that the consolidated dullness, lack of poetry and absence of imagination in a war office are probably essential factors in the domination of that elementary stupidity known as war.

War is inevitable, and as it is dull and ugly, a war office must naturally evolve behind it with suitable allied characteristics. I am sure that if any opposing power were given the opportunity of a personally conducted tour round our English War Office, they would throw the towel in, instead of wasting time trying to win against us.

I feel that a sense of humor would somehow be a dangerous attribute for a War Office, and we were fortunate in having a very small quantity of this weakening material in ours, thereby standing a much better chance to win in wars. There *were* people with a sense of humor in the War Office, but they were not allowed to poison the main body with this pernicious quality.

Old Bill's war angle and that of the Biggest Noise in the War Office were as two poles apart.

The two opposing parties were in their right respective places.

Had Old Bill been in charge of the operations in the War Office, I doubt whether we should have done as well as

FROM FRONT TO FRONT

we did. The average War Office type of general is a mixture of honor, discipline, courage, lack of humor, and the complete belief that the army is the most important thing in the world. Promotion to their exalted positions is mainly secured by having social success and private means to augment their pay. This is not wrong, for the type that has these things has generally also the physique and the brain which is most required for the purpose. Of course these people really and truly like a war, for, after all, that is their trade. If they deny this they are not true to their art.

The head of a department store likes to be busy at what a department store is for. A general must correspondingly admit that the use of force, in some way, is what he is selling, and war is the culminating note of force. I have nothing but admiration for these men. Old Bill admits their existence and leaves it at that. I admire them, but they are not on my beat as intimate and desirable friends. I feel sure that I should have felt most uncomfortable if I had been privileged to live with Cæsar, Hannibal, Attila, Napoleon or Abd-el-Krim. Their job is not mine, and I should feel the scorn they had for me.

But let me return to the British War Office. It is a mammoth cube of dull brown stone, with severe-looking corridors and a multitude of somber rooms. It absorbs tons and tons of paper daily and vomits the results forth in the shape of tons and tons of army orders, reports and memos. In this forbidding labyrinth lurk masses of generals and

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those who by our system hover around them. There is nothing dearer to the British hundred per cent. military heart than to have the titles of their respective jobs alluded to by means of assorted letters of the alphabet. For instance you come across a door labeled something like this:

B. U. N. K.

Then you know that the Brigade, Under, Nominal, (don't know what the "K" can mean, so let it go) lives there.

The whole organization is composed of a mass of this stuff:

The D. A. Q. M. G., the P. Q. R. S. T., the R. S. V. P., the P. T. O. and the I. O. U.

This place is unbeatable, I said to myself, after I had seen it for the first time, and now as I write, I would much like to be shown any other war office that could stand up against it.

From my study of the faces of German generals I fancy that the German War Office might come second.

On the eventful occasion when I had to report after the battle of the Somme I was ushered along several unfurnished corridors and shown into the office of the (alphabetical group on door again, and as I don't know what they mean I shall hereafter take wild guesses at the letters used). I was led up before the desk of the X. Y. Z., a tired-looking officer in full uniform, with a lot of medal ribbons, and surrounded on all sides by baskets full of papers, mostly yellow. He looked at me with scorn and suspicion. On my telling him that I had



It is at times almost impossible to keep a poker face

FROM FRONT TO FRONT

been summoned to appear, he felt I had better be taken to see the S. P. H. I. N. X. He decided to come with me; so we left the office and started off on a hike down the stone corridors.

One of the great dangers about the War Office is that if you are not a good walker the man you are after may have gone to lunch before you get to his office. On this occasion we just got to the S. P. H. I. N. X. in time. He was in conference with the P. U. S. H., and both of them did me the honor of asking me out to lunch. In the padded recesses of one of London's dull but soothing clubs I was told that a desire had been expressed for me to go to the French Army and there proceed to draw pictures similar to those I had been doing with the British. A few days later I was given all my instructions, passports and introductory papers, put on the Intelligence Staff, and ordered to report in Paris. I was at last one of those people with a colored band round the hat, who could see people off to the trenches and say, "Good luck, old boy!" At least that was what I thought. I was disappointed.

CHAPTER XI

THROUGH THE STAGE DOOR OF THE WAR

THE ordinary routine of Old Bill's war life bred an extremely narrow outlook compared to the gigantic size of the contest.

Being just a private in a battalion, he went where the battalion went and meekly accepted the geographical luck that resulted.

Bill never wondered what was to right or left of him. He knew what was behind and what was in front. He never could vision a composite picture of it all, nor did he want to. He left all that to his superiors. He was more concerned about the punctual arrival of the rum in the trenches than the arrangement of the allies along those four hundred miles of frontage. He saw nothing of the ponderous works behind and bothered his head little about the stupendous size of the organization. He rarely got leave and, when he did, he was simply removed from the front by a standard path and released in England where again his joys were extremely local. At the end of his leave he was removed back to the line again up the same path.

THROUGH THE STAGE DOOR OF THE WAR

His was more or less the angle of thought that an elephant must have in Ringling's Circus. He enters the arena from stables beyond, goes through his tricks, and is ushered out again. I don't suppose there is an elephant at Ringling's who has sat down and worried about the Ringling Brothers and how their giant organization is run.

My own chances of observation and full understanding were little in advance of Old Bill's, until I got the job of roaming the fronts, as described in the previous chapter.

During this work I not only saw the French Front, and all that lay behind it, but had a good nose round the Italian Front as well. In fact I got a general and proportionate view of the whole bag of tricks. My only regret is that I missed the side lines we were running in Palestine and Mesopotamia. I feel sure there must have been some pathetically funny things to discover in that mixture of Turks, Germans, camels and biblical landmarks.

Old Bill opening a tin of plum and apple jam while pausing in Beersheba, seems incongruous to me.

I had left the War Office with instructions to report in Paris. This I did and was told to go up to the Yser Canal near Dixmude. I was annoyed, for I had hoped for Verdun. However, that was to come later.

Now to go to all the places that I went to from this moment on cast my life among the great railroad stations of the Continent. And what a story those stations told! Great hearts they were through which blood was pumped out to the various sectors of that immense line.

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

Take three of the great stations of Paris, for example. The Gare du Nord, the Gare de L'Est, the Gare Saint Lazare. One could read in each what the front line it fed was like, just as a doctor can read ailments from our tongue. During the heavy attacks on Verdun, the scenes at the Gare de L'Est were obviously of a tense nature. The good-bys at day coach windows were far more intense at the Gare de L'Est than at the Gare du Nord. Verdun was fed by the former, and that comparatively quiet sector from Amiens to Rheims by the latter.

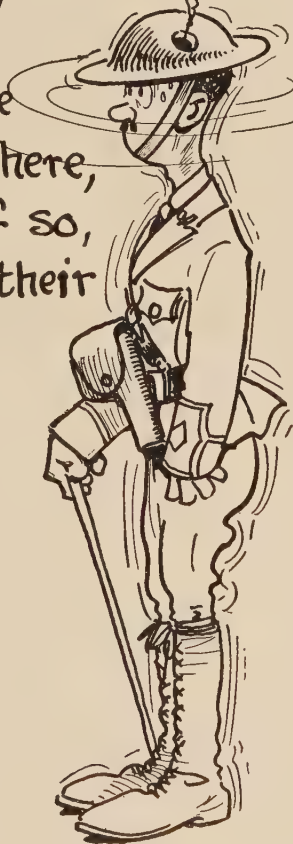
Meanwhile the Gare Saint Lazare would have the cheerful ease brought about by arrivals and departures which spelled only the partings that occur back of a front.

All this brings me to Old Bill's station, and it was only because I had now attained a position which enabled a proper perspective to be procured, that I was able to trace the old walrus along the via Dolorosa that stretched from his home in central England to his home in the mud.

Let us assume the remarkable improbability that Bill was home on leave. After a short but crowded freedom, spent mostly in various bars explaining the war to a group of contradicting friends, the day would come for his departure. He would leave his Maggie and his gray and grimy but dear-to-his-heart town of Wolverbrum. In his heart there was a gladness to be going back to the boys and the adventure again. It is strange how hatred for even the worst trenches falls off the moment you come out of them.

Now is that quite clear?
You will proceed to that
old barn and find out

if there
are any
enemy
machine
guns there,
and if so,
draw their
fire



Bruce
Bainfather

Do colonels eat their young?

THROUGH THE STAGE DOOR OF THE WAR

Bill would arrive by train at some point of embarkation and join up with a band of others whose leave also had terminated. That might have been their last leave for all they knew, and it was for many, but no depression would be in the crowd. Across the Channel and along a dreary and monotonous tramride there would be nothing but talking, laughter and games of cards. If the train stopped, and trains in those days had a knack of stopping for an hour or so for no apparent reason, an opportunity was provided for laughing at Frenchmen working in the fields or practising the latest wise-crack culled while back on leave. Perhaps some curious-looking rustic would be seen piling up turnips with a fork. If so, he'd be greeted from the train windows with something like, "'Ullo, Friday! How's Crusoe?" or "Mind ye don't fall through the seat of yer pants, Mister."

The train would move on, and slowly rattle its way toward the front. Twenty-four hours later it would draw up at some depressing-looking siding and Old Bill's journey was over.

Back in the same old sector again with the ceaseless round of trench life as the only prospect. "And that night," as they love to say in the movies, Old Bill would join the crowd and be marched up along a rutted sloshy road, across two bogs and a marsh, to find himself in his allotted slot. He would be lucky if before that night was over he did not hear the voice of a sergeant roar:

"'Ere! you! come on! get out! Ye're wanted for that

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

fatigue party. Get along down to the ration dump and fetch them sheets of corrugated iron up to A trench."

It was moments such as these that made Old Bill's home in Wolverhampton seem very far away.

Much as I myself hated those horrible trenches, those long nights of rain and bullets, yet I was once responsible for cutting my leave short and going back a week before time. It is another little point illustrative of the curious fascination of war once roused to the right degree.

I had had leave in England for the first time and at the end of it was far from well. The doctors examined me and ordered an extension of a fortnight. I had done one week of this extra fortnight when I went to Victoria Station to see off an officer friend, returning to France. I stood at the side of his train and watched it crowding up with other gay souls, all swathed about with warlike trappings and luggage. You would have thought they were off on an excursion to a football game. Something surged within me. I couldn't stand it. Without any warning to my home, without any baggage and with only the uniform I stood in, I climbed into the train and returned to the front, and in a couple of days found myself sitting in a trench regretting my impetuosity. Fact.

CHAPTER XII

SQUEEZING THE WAR FOR JOKES

THIS job of mine of drawing pictures on all fronts contained many interesting features, but also many discomforts and worries. I welcomed the discomforts for they stimulated my joking capacity. It may have been ironical, but by far the funniest part of the war could be found in the trenches. There is something about danger that makes the Anglo-Saxon laugh. For example:

On a certain quiet morning in one of Old Bill's trenches, the serenity had encouraged a certain amount of rash basking in false security. Bill sat on a damp sandbag at the entrance to his dugout, carving mud off his boots with his pocket knife, much as a grocer deals with masses of lard. Bert was busy over a fire bucket, warming up some tea. Alf, in the darkened recess of a dugout a few yards away, was, with much sucking of pencil point, composing a letter home.

The whole trench was dreary and quiet. Behind, about a hundred yards off, was a shattered farm which had the merit of a water supply of sorts, as well as still being a good place for gathering firewood.

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

Sundry adventurous and roaming spirits had climbed out of the trench and gone off marauding into the background.

The German lines were strangely quiet. They had been so for some time. Familiarity breeds contempt. The lull in danger had caused those making excursions from the trench to walk upright, instead of on all fours.

Among the excursionists was one Private Kemp with red hair which, as all the world knows, inevitably leads to the sobriquet of "Ginger." He had one of those inquiring and experimental natures that so frequently get their owners into trouble. He had left the trench with some strange idea about getting a good wash at the pump in the courtyard. Bill, satisfied with the work put in on his boots, joined Bert in alternate drinks of tea from the blackened mess tin. All was peace. Suddenly with a crackling splutter a German machine-gun burst on the tranquillity and started peppering the remnants of the old farm. Old Bill, Bert and Alf rose like corks to the surface and looked back at the scene. Three or four men hastily burst out of the unsound shelter of the farm and scrambled in doubled-up positions breathlessly back into the trench. The machine-gun was now augmented by a good lively burst of shelling. The Germans had evidently got annoyed at the ease with which we were strolling around, and were jealous of the farm's delights.

Every man reached the trench rapidly and safely except "Ginger," who could now be seen by an amused and un-

Katchme!
Imoff Popoff
zipoff 7118X
Attaboyski
yiew!

Vodka Vodka
УЛИНУЛИНУ
Popoff, I'm off,
Weow!

VODKA
VODKA
JIG, SAW
Y!



Impression of Russian Army retreating
from XIPPOXILLOPOFF by one who
never saw it (ofcourse Russians may have
other attitudes, I've never seen any)

SQUEEZING THE WAR FOR JOKES

sympathetic crowd, darting about inside the perforated ruin in nothing but a shirt, and trying with nervous jerks to get into his khaki pants again. That washing idea had found him out. At last, in a semi-clothed state, he made a dash for it and got shot through the thigh about half-way. The entire audience roared with laughter. He was brought in quickly by some friends in the trench, who crawled out to get him, and later was conveyed away with an enviable wound, but it was all a great laugh. I suppose they laugh at bull fights, when the bull catches the toreador in a funny place.

Knowing that the place to look for inspiration was as near to the front as possible, I used to explain this to the various authorities in the other armies as I went along. I wanted to see and know, to get in on the ground floor of their troubles. You don't have to look for jokes then; they come out of you naturally.

I had great difficulty in explaining exactly what I wanted to do to the various people who had my destinies in hand. With the best intentions in the world they thought that putting me in a Rolls-Royce and driving me along the back of the front was all I needed. Once they did get the idea and carried it out so well that I only missed being blown up by a shell by a few yards. That was at a fort in front of Verdun. This I considered giving me too much local color. I would rather miss the joke and the shell as well.

Up along the Yser Canal near the North Sea was where I had a real "close up" view of the French soldier. I had

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

seen him wandering about Paris and now and again passed him on the march, but here was where I got right up against his real true trench life. First impression: an enormous and preposterous greatcoat. I have found no other soldier of any army who is expected to walk about with such a department store as a French private. The greatcoat is only the foundation for what is to come, but it is worth attention. The tail at the back, formed by the center and the two side corners folded on to it, only just clears the ground. Were the coat made of shell, a French soldier would look much like a turtle, walking on its hind legs. On top of this greatcoat the trouble begins. A bandage of assorted hardware is bound about his waist. Cups, tins and bayonets festoon themselves beneath a cluster of dry goods, which mount upward until crowned by what looks like an inverted tin for making Christmas puddings. Round about the third floor he has a nice variety of bags and bottles, hung in inconvenient places, which I suppose all have a bearing on war.

I felt sorry for the poor fellow, as a bronzed and mustached face gazed out at me from all this. He might die inside that warehouse of his, and nobody find it out for a week.

How a French soldier managed to fight with all this on, puzzled me. Of course, he took it off now and again, but I think on the whole he is safer in his department store. His safest plan would be to fight with his back to the enemy. Few modern implements of war would be able to get through



You can call this picture "C'est pour la France"
or "C'est la guerre" (he's saying everything)

The French soldier

SQUEEZING THE WAR FOR JOKES

the woolen department, on through the hardware, and so to the Frenchman himself. I am talking of the ordinary soldier of the line in the French Army. They marshaled even stranger objects than this. Every nation sent out for what help it could get in the Great War. Colored soldiers were raked up from the ends of the earth to assist. They came from India, Africa, and even China, and among the various tints to arrive were the brand known as Spahis. Sons of the Desert they were, in wonderful garments that looked like bathrobes, and with headdresses of a complexity that only African ingenuity and patience could hope to achieve. The war was all wrong for them. It didn't give them a proper chance. Their style was cramped. What they wanted was a few thousand square miles of hot sand to gallop around in. Not that damp water-logged motionless war we had on the Western Front.

However, there they were, these Spahis up at the left-hand edge of the war, making the best of it.

Uniform gave me many a secret laugh throughout that period. I observed a rough mathematical law running through the theory of uniform. Roughly speaking, the gaudier the uniform, the more unimportant the Power. This is particularly noticeable when applied to officers in peace time. Those feeble and perpetually disturbing Balkan countries have got it all over England and America in the way of uniform. Whenever I saw an officer wearing blue tights, a close fitting and too short tunic profusely em-

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broidered with gold, patent leather top boots with tassels in front, a highly decorated collar four inches high and a hat suitable for the chorus of a revue, I knew he must come from Neurasthenia or some other small Balkan state.

The French Army as a whole is prettier to look at than the English and American. That blue they wear beats khaki as an eye-tickler. The Italians, too, have the bulge on us in uniforms. An interesting gray also beats khaki in allurements. I feel, summing the whole thing up, that the German Army has the best make-up for soldiers. It looks the most warlike, and that after all is what it should do.

A German general in full warpaint looks good to me.

The disguise contains elements of fright, and the barbaric races invariably use fright procured by self-disfigurement and decoration as a weapon. As war is still a barbaric pastime, I feel the German uniform is the most suitable.

Take a look at the photograph of some German general; say General Von Delicatessen of the Skull and Crossbone Hussars. You will find he has a face about as hard and lined as a railroad junction, on top of which is a steel helmet surmounted by a spread eagle. Note the chin-strap of heavy linked chain that he must have had made by a blacksmith, and the mustache bristling in the center of all this, that has been trained like a yew hedge. Below, under a martial cloak, he wears a uniform encrusted with metal, buttons, stars and crosses competing for space on a rich gray tunic.



Billiards up at the chateau

SQUEEZING THE WAR FOR JOKES

Finish this off in your mind's eye with a pair of Prussian top boots complete with spurs, and you have something to frighten you into any retreat unless you are careful. I see where the Germans got the idea, and they were right. The savages of New Guinea make a practise of garbing themselves in a way calculated to frighten their enemies. A face streaked with tattoo-marks and paint, an empty tobacco tin through the lobe of each ear, and a rolling pin through the nose, they have found, add greatly to chances of success.

We Anglo-Saxons who are above this sort of thing have gone to the other extreme. Who was it, I should like to know, that invented a collar and tie for officers? Imagine mixing the necessity of a collar button with a modern offensive. Our uniform always seems to me to be a gentle example of the hypocrisy that is part of what is called civilization. The officers' uniform of to-day, in both the British and American Armies, looks like an endeavor at compromise between man as he likes to look in peace and man as he has to look in war. What they fit even Old Bill into for a war is not quite so good as the New Guinea War Office could have arranged. The savages of Polynesia could not improve on Old Bill's face from a fright angle, but I dare say an empty Heinz's Mushroom Ketchup bottle through each ear and a half-dozen oyster shells round his neck might improve him.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM POWDERPUFFS TO PUFFS OF POWDER

THERE is something about Paris that brings up in most of us a vision of pleasurable crime. Whether in peace or war, Paris emanates an alluring suction power for those of us who like slightly criminal adventure now and again. It was in a way a good place to have at the back of a war. For, Heaven knows, those fellows at the front could do with jazzing up life a bit at times. If you escaped from one of those organized massacres at the front and got leave after, a dash of Montmartre was refreshing to a great many. Soldiers are soldiers all the world over, and it is no good slipping haloes over them all like quoits.

Men took the war in a variety of ways. There were many with some great allegiance back home to which they wished to be true. There were many who could not associate the war with anything but an austere life throughout; there were many others who ate, drank and were merry for to-morrow they had a good chance to die.

Now as a succulent allurements to the latter kind of man, I must say Paris wanted a lot of beating. After an excessive

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masculine atmosphere which all wars possess, it was a soothing thing to come back into the proximity of women of any kind anywhere; but when the women were of the high voltage and bright plumage variety it was better still. Now, the authorities running the war had thought of all this, and it was hard for the ordinary soldier or officer to get leave to go to Paris. I am not surprised, for I fear that the dangers of great cities in war times are manifold. "Mademoiselle from Paris" had more guns on board than her cheaper sister from Armentières.

I had to go to Paris on several occasions during the war, but only after the battle of the Somme, when I was put on to the new traveling job. I had the fortune to see London, Paris and Rome while the war was on, and to size up the look of things backward, as it were. I happened to be in Paris when one of the smashing big German offensives was running at Verdun and my observation led me to realize what a curious race the French are. As a matter of fact, you can judge no country by its metropolis. New York is not representative of America. London is only mildly representative of England. Paris is absolutely misleading about France. The real France and the French people are in no way reflected in the kind of thing we all assume Paris to be. To hang around the boulevards is not the way to grasp how Verdun was done, and one must argue back from what people achieve to pierce their misleading armor and understand what they are at the core.

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You couldn't read the story of Château Thierry by sitting in Times Square. In fact if you stood there for half an hour and watched the ordinary every-day crowd that passes you might think such a thing as Château Thierry impossible.

The same with London. Piccadilly Circus does not give you the idea of what Britain did at Ypres. And yet, somehow or other, we are all very prone to judge France by Paris.

Now on going to Paris during the war and staying there for longer than just passing through I noticed that the resident officer or private had recovered from the naughty and tourist-like conception of the place. There were many officers and privates of both the British and American Armies stationed there, with the duty before them of curbing the results of this "Paris" feeling as it existed among those who managed to escape from the front and get on for a fleeting visit.

The war-time joys at Paris always impressed me with drama and sadness. The lounge at the Folies Bergère for example, with its glaring yellow light, fountains, palms, jazzy bands and demi-mondaines, seemed like a vast shimmering gauze curtain, through which one could see the cold blue trenches way off out beyond in the night. It was not touching to think of the cabarets as one sat in a trench. It was very touching the other way round. To pause and think in the middle of the war made one's head reel with

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its painful absurdity: millions of human beings sitting opposite one another along four hundred miles of trenches, out there in the darkness, armed to the teeth and reduced to the primitive fighting instinct in order to gain some political and commercial advantage, while far back behind that ridiculous line, Paris with its bright lights, comforts and amusements.

As one sucked at a lemon squash through a couple of straws and gazed at those women who seemed to cruise around like goldfish in a bowl, one could so clearly see the other picture: men crawling across No Man's Land, through barbed wire and mud; the splutter of machine-guns; the quiet soaring of star shells into the sky, momentarily revealing the dark, horrible No Man's Land and the still bodies of those that lay there.

"*Non ce soir, Mademoiselle,*" you found yourself saying, as your dream was interrupted by a highly decorated face gazing into yours.

But it must not be thought that all this tinkle, brass and scent should be condemned. The myriad women of slender allegiance played a big part in the war. We did not all have splendid loyal wives or loyal sweethearts. The Great War, ranging from a mile behind the front-line trenches, back to the Pacific Coast of America, and to the uttermost fringes of Australia, offered every conceivable sex story known to man. Loyalty, infidelity and promiscuity, all had their places in the war. I am of the opinion that no adverse judgment

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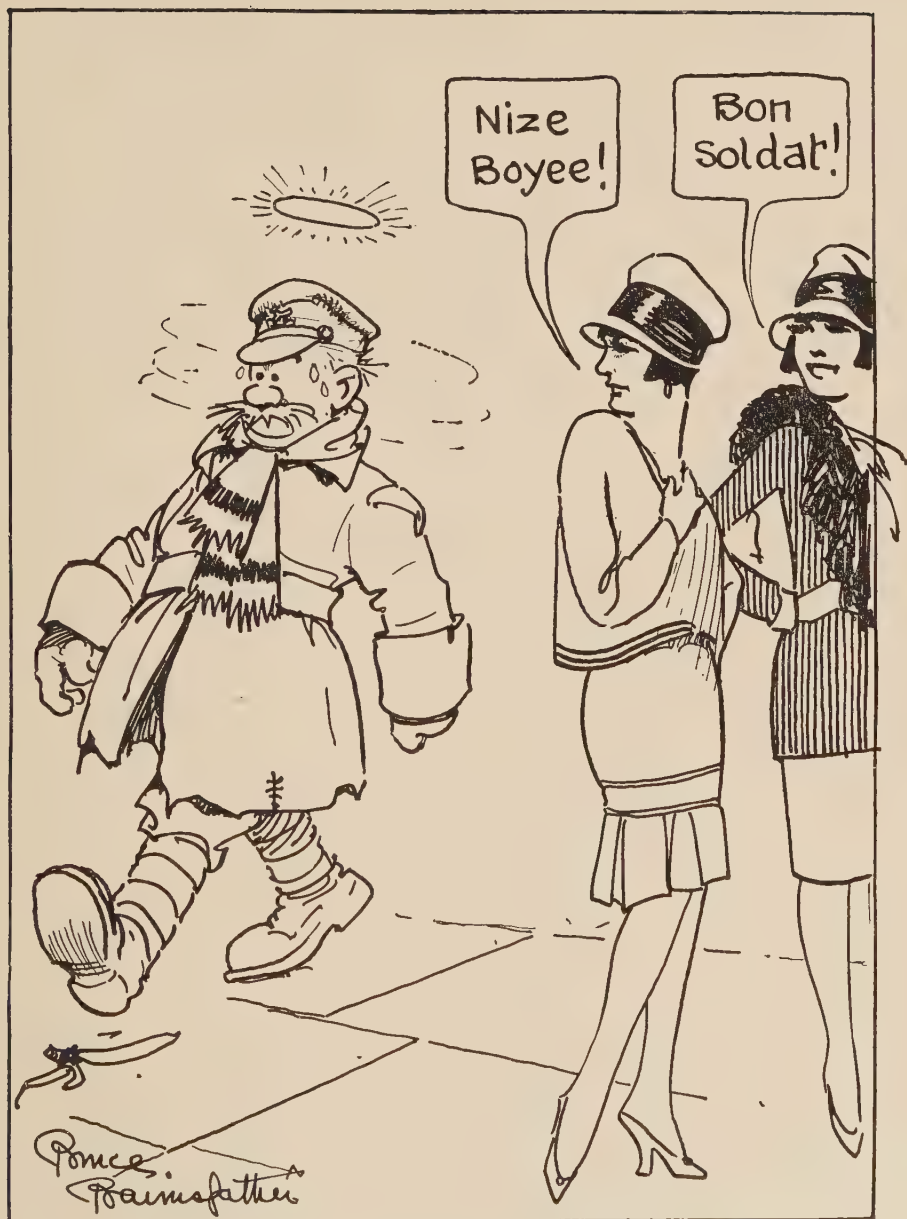
should be imposed on traits you do not like. All thoughts must be in proportion to what those men endured, both physically and mentally. And what women endured, back of it all, they alone can fully tell.

There were towns and villages which suffered from oscillating fortunes of conquest. The Germans might hold a town one week and be pushed out of it the next, the civilian population remaining behind in both cases. In would come the soldiers of the rival armies and be met, and lived with, in precisely the same way.

The little village of "Crumple-sur-Crack," nestling in the devastated but now quiescent area behind the charred and battered city of Ypres, was once upon a time in the possession of the Germans. They had swarmed across this part of the country and lived in that village, in the days when it looked as if they were about to push us off the map altogether.

German officers and men occupied every house and barn. Time passed, the Germans were pushed back out of this little hamlet, and the British occupation began. Later, the Germans, in one of their frenzied and forceful drives, retook the neighborhood, whereupon the village passed into their hands for the second time. Such was the fortune of many a village, but this dear little Crumple-sur-Crack is as good a sample to take as any.

I was not with the crowd that pushed the Germans out the first time, but was there before we were in turn pushed



Eyes front

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out ourselves. This was the effect I observed among the French residents of the place: "The King is dead; long live the King!"

It is too much to expect things otherwise.

For the owner of a farm or cottage with property attached it would be foolish to sing *Rule Britannia* just as the Germans had got comfortably settled in the place, and it would be equally unwise to burst out with a throaty version of *Deutschland Ueber Alles* when the British had just dug in for a visit.

I found that the inhabitants did not mind the change of lodgers, provided the rival lodgers refrained from staging a battle in Main Street. This may not have been patriotic but it was sensible.

My regiment, in company with several others, was sent to this neighborhood for a rest. Old Bill, Bert and Alf were always in favor of being "sent for a rest." To get thoroughly mixed up with all the billets and *estaminets* behind the line, with all the resulting but comparative ease, was a godsend to them. The officers liked "rests" too, for sometimes quite a "kick" could be got out of the life behind. For my part I rather suspected a "rest." There was a tendency to send for a "rested" battalion when some dirty work had to be done.

A long, worn, muddy line of us entered Crumple-sur-Crack, where we were to "rest" and were told to find billets. Some had been allotted, but another lieutenant and I got

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left up in the air somehow or other. Suddenly my soldier servant, a typical "Alf," ran out from behind some cottages and told me that he had found a place that he thought I would like, by which I knew he had found one that suited himself.

We went to it, and I saw the reason. The Reason met us at the door, a blonde, who bade us enter and examine the place. Out of the corner of my eye I could see two other brunette Reasons hovering in the background. A humble little abode it was with three rooms, two of which they were willing to give over for our use. My soldier servant and the servant of the other lieutenant could have a room in the cottage next door.

I took stock of the whole place. Countless souvenirs of the war adorned the front room: photographs of soldiers, empty shell cases, a clip full of cartridges, and so on; all British souvenirs. Nothing like having British souvenirs if the British were there. A framed and signed photograph of Hindenburg would have spoiled the whole effect. I found later that the Germans had occupied those very billets. One of the girls gave us an imitation of how some particular German officer used to stamp up and down the little front room explaining exactly what he thought of England. A signed photograph of General French on the walls would have been bad policy then.

For the future I recommend that part of Northern France and Belgium keep an assorted stock of souvenirs



Rejected statue design for war memorial commemorating the liberation of Belgium

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of various nations. They have had so many wars of different kinds around the neighborhood they ought to be prepared for emergencies. Perhaps they are, perhaps before Waterloo they got hold of the interchangeable picture idea. I can just see Mademoiselle Something or Other taking down the tintype of Napoleon, as Wellington was reported approaching. Ah yes, there are many, many souvenirs in a war, sad ones too, that belong to both sides. A lot of souvenirs grow up and get sent to school. . . .

It is wrong to imagine that the French and the Belgians were immoral. They simply were suffering, as all nations involved in war do, from a temporary laxity of morals, or, I would rather say, an excessive ease of sex friendship due to the neurasthenic conditions of the war. These remarks are intended to cover a very vast section of war life. There were other sections too. Old Bill went through it all true to his Maggie, and he stood for countless thousands, but then, Old Bill was aided by a brain that is difficult to shake into excitement and neurasthenia. Old Bill may have been a member of the First Royal Don Juans but you'd never know it.

My suspicion about this "rest" was right. Within ten days the news came through that the Germans had broken the line at Ypres, and we were rushed up to participate in the second battle there.

CHAPTER XIV

THREE THOUSAND MILES

THERE are certain questions appertaining to the Great War, which seem destined never to be conclusively answered. The smoking-car politician and the "after-dinner war-explainer" have a fertile mound of undecided problems to work at, which so far as I can see shows few signs of wearing down. I don't know quite how many times I have "fought" the various battles of Ypres over orally, or how many times, with the aid of a box of matches and several lumps of sugar, I have had what really happened at the Marne or at Jutland explained to me. I am pretty good with the matches and sugar myself. Sometimes when feeling very well and patriotic, I clearly show how, if the war had lasted another week, and I personally had been in command of the Allies, we could have rounded up the German Armies like a herd of bison. All over the world, the sugar-and-match politicians and strategists have been doing this stuff ever since the war stopped. There are fortunately several points about the whole affair which never cease in entertainment value. A few that rapidly come to my mind are the following:

THREE THOUSAND MILES

Why did America really come into the war?

Could we have won if she had not?

Should the war have stopped when it did?

Who won the battle of Jutland?

Why were the Turks on the wrong side? And

“What happened to Kitchener?”

I could mention several more in the same vein, but those few suffice to illustrate my meaning.

The American side of the war has interested me deeply, for after my return from the Italian Front I was instructed by the War Office in London to proceed to the American Headquarters in France and report myself there. I arrived just after the first American soldiers had landed, and before they had taken part in any fighting. I stayed with the American Army and crawled around, up and down their front, for a considerable time. I have met many American soldiers, both officers and privates. The whole subject became a big thing in my war existence.

The British and American Armies were much more alike than the others. Their soldiers had the same mental attitude to warfare, that peculiar morose humor possessed by no other armies in just the marvelous way the Anglo-Saxons have it. I had good cause to investigate their thought angle to warfare and how the humor stood. My work at the time consisted of being attached to all the various armies in the field, absorbing their ways and manners and crystallizing, as far as I could, what I saw and felt, on paper.

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The British soldier's point of view I knew well. Old Bill had by now been my means of describing that wonderful dogged resignation and courage bathed in cynical humor which the British soldiers possess. My next job had been the French Army. Here I sensed the war business being attacked from a different angle. My best means of describing the difference is to say the French were "IN" the war while the rest of us were "AT" it. They never got that peculiar humor out of trench misery our fellows did. I feel rather that a French soldier, if he sees a war joke, has to sing the *Marseillaise* quickly after, like a "chaser." He is more in the heroic vein. One has only to think, and know, about Verdun to realize what the French soldier is like, but he is inferior in that mysterious, unbeatable cynical quality of the Anglo-Saxon.

The Italian Army was hard to size up in this respect, for after all the war they had, bad as it was, was smaller in proportion. In fact, there was no other front which, unfortunately, could compare to the French front for magnitude in the struggle, extending as it did from the North Sea to Switzerland, and withstanding the great ferocity of the attacks.

And now I come back to what I mean about the American Army. It was with them that, after long absence on other fronts, I found the same spirit that permeated the British lines. The angle of outlook was the same: an unconquerable feeling of domination; a subtle unboasted feel-

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ing of superiority, mingled with deep and often sardonic humor. I immediately felt at home. As an old resident at the front, I gazed upon this vast array from across the ocean with enormous interest and pity. I knew what they had come to do. I knew the sort of thing in store for them. I thought of the myriad homes scattered over the States who in pride, hope and conviction had sent them there. I thought much about their part in the war, how they got there, why, and what they did, and just like a sugar-and-match war theorist, these were some of my speculations: If America had not come to our rescue in Europe, we would have lost the war. America came and would be the largest factor in stopping it. I think it wiser to say the war was "stopped" rather than won. It was stopped when the Germans had had enough. If the positions were reversed I do not think the Allies would have called the end that came "losing the war" any more than the Germans do now.

America was three thousand miles away from that mess we were all in, and yet entered the war, and went at it with the cheerful courage and determination of one of the near-by participants. It must have been much harder for American soldiers to work up a personal concern in the cause of the struggle than for the soldiers of other armies. They came to join in a hullabaloo that could not possibly interest them beyond the point of a benevolent crusade. And yet all the ardor, persistence and determination that could be imagined came with them.

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I somehow feel the nations already on the ground did not fully appreciate this. One can easily understand the fighting attitude of the French, who, after all, were having the whole darn business fought out on their own property. One can understand the British attitude owing to their proximity to France and realization of what a Germanized France and Germanized English Channel would mean. But America, with an ocean as a insulator from the discussion in hand, is not so easily understood. There was, on the whole, a lack of appreciation about this. The French seem to have a sort of idea that every one who came to assist them was really bound to do so. Noisy, emotional welcomes on arrival don't mean much; it's the wear and tear of ordinary hard-boiled warfare, afterward, that speaks the real truth.

Thoughts such as these floated through my head, just as America arrived. With my past experience and my present knowledge of America I have turned them from idle speculation into convictions.

Fresh from my Italian war experiences with the Alpini and Berseleri on the Carso, I arrived in Paris, reported and was told to go to Neufchâteau. This delectable township is not far from Verdun and was used as headquarters by some of the American troops. It was here that General Clarence Edwards, commanding the 26th Division, resided, and to him I reported myself on arrival. To those who know Neufchâteau, my description will be simply a verification of their views; to those who don't, let it be a



There were times when gentlemen preferred ponds

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warning not to go there in the next war if you can help it. It was just a small provincial multi-smell, French town, but it had a hotel. After the first week there I wondered whether after all the Allies were right in preventing Germany from overrunning France. If Germany's war aim was the destruction of that hotel, then the whole of my military view-point is altered.

The hotel stood at a crossroads, and I suppose prior to the big row we were having was used by farmers and the lowest forms of commercial travelers. The town, of course, was just a mass of billets for officers and soldiers of all ranks, just a hive of the usual military activity. For outsiders like myself this hotel was the place to go to. It was just a drab colored cube, divided internally into what the makers fondly imagined to be bedrooms and passages; bleak and bare chambers with desolate and sickly-looking furniture; no carpets or curtains; just a big case of nothing.

It was as usual pouring rain, which reminds me to mention that, if ever I do not speak of the weather again in this book, I want you to assume that it is pouring rain. After I had reported at Press Headquarters, I asked for a room and was given one at the forlorn hostelry. A very unromantic daughter of France led me up creaky barren stairs to a barren passage, and thence into a large barren room. Here I flung down my bag and asked for *de l'eau chaude* which, I have gathered, means some hot water. The daughter of France, I think, resented this monstrous request but

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disappeared to inquire about the possibility of upsetting the organization. She was the usual type of girl we found around billets, a thick-set, sturdy lump, with red wrists about four inches thick, and I should imagine a skull about the same. I don't know whether I was unlucky or not, but never throughout the war could I find the type of girl that fiction, the theater and the motion picture always insist was at the billets. In vain I looked for one with black silk stockings, high heeled shoes and a magazine-cover face, but never found her. The best I ever saw was one whose name I can not remember, in the billet next to mine up near Ypres, and I think she was corralled by my soldier servant at the time. Such a wealth of glamour has grown up around "Mademoiselle from Armentières" that I feel the hoax should be exposed. The war, however, was so harsh, hard and terrible in the main that the sight of any woman was a comfort, for, after all, they all spell something softer and kindlier than a colonel or a sergeant-major, and where they live is better than a trench.

My Joan of Arc at the hotel brought some hot water in a small jug and left me in, I think, disgust.

I had come from Paris via Bar-le-Duc and was in need of a good clean-up before starting out to see what the place was all about. My job was to go everywhere and see everything, if possible extract the juice of it all, and squeeze it out on paper in the shape of drawings for the various papers. I had just finished a large group of drawings in Italy, and

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now I was to start over again here, with the American Army, as it prepared to deliver the blow which was to end the whole affair.

Throughout my wanderings it has fallen to me to be entertained by many people both high and low, from lunching with generals and politicians to being a guest in a soldier's dugout at a meal of bully beef and tea. I have had dinner in an ancient palace in Italy with the Italian Headquarters Staff, and have lunched with the French Commanders on the Yser Canal and at Verdun. I mention these things simply to show that I am in a position to size up war hospitality, and I may say that without exception the cheer and hospitality extended to me while I was with the American forces was the greatest that I ever experienced.

It interested me to study the American officer closely and compare him with the British kind. I remember the first thing that struck me after seeing an American headquarters. The senior and junior officers talked to one another with what impressed me as great equality and friendliness. The lunch table conversation seemed devoid of awe for their seniors on the part of the juniors, and the seniors freely joked with the lieutenants about current events. The frigidity noticeable among the English was missing. The American colonel seemed to have the heart of a lieutenant and yet remained a colonel, and a strong one at that. This peculiarity I have subsequently noticed throughout America. Old men are "younger" in the States

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than they are in England, and the sociability, regardless of varying ages and position, is greater.

That first night, when I had sufficiently cleaned myself up, I left my room without a pang at parting, went downstairs to the café, took a drink of some sort at the bar, and went off to the Press Headquarters again to hear the plans for the morrow. Later that night I was taken to the Officers' Club which lay along the road past my hotel. "The Lafayette Club" it was called, a name which I know means a great deal to a great many, and here for the first time I had the pleasure of meeting the famous American author, Irvin S. Cobb. A merry spot was that club, and while the smoke-laden atmosphere was pierced with the sounds of gay chatter, laughter and clinking glasses, so many miles away the guns thundered along the Verdun Sector, and the Argonne awaited those men who had come three thousand miles.

CHAPTER XV

THE AMERICAN ARMY

THE next morning I again reported myself at Press Headquarters, a dismal house up a narrow street, which had been taken over by the military. Inside it contained the usual blotting paper, ink and telegraph form atmosphere, common to these establishments. I was told that the General wished to see me. I was taken to his headquarters by a lieutenant and introduced to him. I was flattered to find that he knew who I was and all about what I was doing. After a short talk he suggested that I should accompany him in his car, as he had a round of inspection to make. The General, one of his A. D. C.'s and I started off to see how certain troops were getting along at their jobs of practising the making of trenches. We drove out of Neufchâteau to some high barren ground in the vicinity where I came close and face to face with the doughboy for the first time. It is as well to record my impressions of that morning:

- (a) Splendid size and health and strength;
- (b) The similarity to our Australian soldiers in physique and style;

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- (c) The sense of humor that I have before alluded to;
- (d) The fluid bad language which is essential to making war endurable. The words were different from ours but the intent was the same. Appealing to the Deity in each unpleasant action is more prevalent in the American Army than in the British. (No halo for the British here, only a different manner of speech.)

We got out and cruised around looking at the operations. These men were digging their practise trenches in the most unattractive ground. There are few occupations duller than digging trenches at any time. Before or after a battle they have a self-protective interest. But practise trenches hold little charm. The crowd I was looking at were some of the New England Division, and here they were rehearsing for the struggle on a bleak hill at the back of Verdun. I could see how much had to be learned for them to get into the swing of the thing as we had by then done. I remembered so well what amateurs we were in 1914, and how as the years passed a trench technique crept out of it all. It is horrible, but there is a great art in war, and I think more art in it now than ever in history. "Art" is scarcely the right word; I mean the efficiency which comes to a man in any mechanical occupation that he follows.

I was shown up and down and around all that practise work, saw a company or so on the march, and so on throughout the morning until we returned to Neufchâteau. On all

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sides I was impressed by the bigness of the arrangements. Everything was being done on an ample and well-rounded scale. One felt power and money behind it. That poor, drab, twisted French town looked all the more wan and crumbling at the advent of this healthy, well-kept crowd of invaders. It was out here near the trench-digging operations that I heard my first American Army joke. A sergeant had taken notice of a newly recruited private, who was rather unperturbed and casual at the proximity of the General on inspection. Determined to correct this laxity he approached the criminal and began:

“Hey! I know we’re fightin’ for democracy, but next time the General comes around, salute, you —— son of a ——!”

I should love to fill the blanks in but any one with a taste for cross-word puzzles can do this for himself. Having heard this crack I felt much relieved. I knew that the American soldier was akin to ours and the American sergeant was the same dear, tough, courageous, wonderful person we have in that line. Sergeants won the war.

That evening I cruised around on my own and rubber-necked at everything. I saw the men in their billets; watched the rations being cooked; observed innumerable faces and figures; and then reluctantly wended my way back to that hotel. Late at night, with a flickering candle at the side of my bed, in the desolate room, I made notes of all I had seen, and thus I began to pile up my impressions of the

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American Army. I do not claim to know anything about the whys and wherefores of the High Command in the war, but as a simple trenchman it has always seemed to me a pity that the American and British Armies were not side by side along the line of the front. I know there were some Americans next us, up around Amiens, but the bulk of the army was separated from us by a wad of French. The sort of ground the American Army had to fight over was very different from what we had. They encountered the kind of stuff that we had in the early days, before we had reached the line stretching from Amiens to Ypres. It was more undulating and wooded than that sector. And if you want something really nasty, it is advancing and attacking through a wood. Of course the word "wood" is apt to be misleading. I mean a collection of charred stumps which have had all the foliage shelled off. There was scarcely a tree in France within five miles of the line that did not want a leaf toupee.

That wonderful achievement, the taking of Belleau Wood, stands out as one of the most devastating encounters of the war. Here it was, too, that the Germans really got the idea of what the American Army was all about. The previous first battle at Cantigny had given them a "basin-full," as Old Bill would say, but at Belleau and Château Thierry the Germans were making a colossal effort—an effort similar to that when they tried to crash the gate at Ypres, one of those efforts at which they felt very insulted to be stopped.

As Commander in Chief
I ask you Mr Busby
to come if you can to
this War, the Empire's
at stake!

All right, old son,
but yer proposition
in writin', and
I'll think it
over



It seems doubtful whether real democracy would pay in a war

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Now, as every one knows, the Marines played a very large and triumphant part in Belleau Wood and subsequent engagements, a fact which interested me intensely for I was fortunate in being sent out to stay a short while with a Marine battalion not far from Neufchâteau. But that visit and its impressions come later. I shall therefore return mentally to my awful hotel and roughly outline how I made my escape from that miserable edifice.

If not off on a job that was too far away, I spent the nights in this hotel—having any meals I wanted, elsewhere. I made a valiant endeavor to procure breakfast there, but the innkeeper's idea of breakfast being a girder of cheese and a bottle of red wine which tasted like a blue serge suit, I gave it up. Wandering down the street I would buy some biscuits, so that I might never be caught starting on some wild, early morning expedition without a meal of some kind.

Each day there was some place to go to—some place on the line, or in billets behind, where one got “close-ups” of all the different regiments and the vast assorted organization. I peeked at everything and was whirled around in a staff or a press car to do so. What meteors those press men were, sensing a story as an African bull elephant senses the hunter! For long patches of time, stories were thin—“red roof stuff,” as they used to say. Nothing was happening, and yet stories had to be cabled back to a vast, interested and expectant public. Generals should really be more considerate of the press and stage bigger and better battles and

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a greater output of them. There were times when, if news had come in that somebody had cut a strand of barbed wire by firing a revolver at it, there would be a marathon car race to the spot and all wires getting white hot with stories.

Before the newspaper head-lines way back in America could explode with:

“REVOLVER CUTS STRAND

BARBED WIRE BELIEVED!”

a very nasty attack might have broken out in the middle of the night and been over before even an American newspaper man could synchronize with it. Back on the British Front I used to feel the irony of this lack of complete synchronization with the horror. Knowing that one's relatives were living a life of one long anxiety, I used to write and tell them as much as possible when we were “out” of the trenches—which of course meant greater safety. Before the letter reached home I might have been rushed off to join in a hurried and unexpected counter-attack. Or, on the other hand, I am sure there was many a moment when they thought I was wielding a battle ax, on the top of a parapet, with shells squirting round me like a shower of confetti at a wedding, and in reality I was probably in an *estaminet* with my feet on a stove, holding idle converse with the least painful mademoiselle I could see. We, the “eyes and

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ears" of the business, knew all this only too well, and the thing was to excel at the art of telling the war to the world. The best war correspondent would be a clairvoyant, a man, for example, who could write the story of Château Thierry almost before it happened. It was one of the American war correspondents, Mr. Floyd Gibbons of the Chicago *Tribune*, who rescued me from that hotel. He deserves a niche in history.

After a day in the country where I had been lurking about regarding a bunch of doughboys as they watched their meager billeting village being shelled, I got back to Neufchâteau depressed at the prospect of the hotel. I went there, had a wash, and came out to rest from its allurements. I went to the Lafayette Club. Here amid the noisy merry throng I somehow or other met Gibbons and in course of conversation told him that I was living at the Bilgemore. He knew his Neufchâteau well, and the mere mention of the hotel moved him to acute sympathy. He suggested my going to stay with him at his billets in an old brewery. Now I liked Gibbons very much and appreciated his kind thought, but I was also elated with the address. Back at the start of this book you will notice that one of my first experiences was work at a brewery. Here was a brewery again. Once I had struck another intervening brewery, south of Armentière, near Epinette, when on one forlorn occasion the Colonel said to me before a projected attack:

"Bairnsfather, do you see that building over there to

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the left? That is what we have to attack; that is your objective to-morrow at dawn."

"What is it, sir?" I asked in a trembling baritone.

"It's an old brewery," he remarked and looked hard at me for any signs of unwillingness to help George the Fifth any further.

I accepted the offer made me by Gibbons with gratitude and alacrity, and that night shifted my few belongings over to his place. He had worked out a very nice apartment for himself in that brewery, something resembling a little comfort. I have no objection to life in a dugout. One expects it to be primitive and in consequence enters into the spirit of it thoroughly; but I hated staying at the Hotel Dugout. Each day we both went off in various directions gathering our respective forms of information. From this place I went on radiating to various parts of the line and the ever growing camps behind. I saw the effects of shelling on the newly arrived American soldiers and noticed they had acquired the same bored calm as we had. I noticed the food and equipment of the soldiers, the best I had seen anywhere. I saw one man in a Salvation Army tent devour twelve fried eggs at one meal and reeled in astonishment at the feat. When I had the acrobat pointed out to me I felt he ought to have had two dozen. They were some husky boys out there!

And so the time wore on, listening and seeing by day; thinking and drawing by night. Suddenly one morning I was told to go along out and visit the Marines, and so see



"What a whale of a difference a few cents made"

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another side of the American man power in France. How little at this time, however, could I vision that the Argonne away to the north, Château Thierry to the west, and all that went with these places were to be the scenes of such vast hardship, endeavor and achievement for those about me!

The Marine battalion that I visited was quartered in and around a little picturesque village about twenty miles from Neufchâteau. I drove out there in a large car with two other newspaper men. On arrival we went to the Colonel's headquarters to report ourselves. He was out at the moment on some parade and we hung around until he got back. In the meantime we were entertained by one or two of the other officers, and I had time to size up the general surroundings. I had seen one or two men in the street pass an officer, and that had been enough to give me the line on the whole thing. The American Marines have the "snap" of the Guards in England. They have also that peculiar confidence-spreading air which comes from professional soldiering abroad. They looked as though they had encountered military life under various conditions. They had the "Colonial" look in the eye caused by strange and varied experiences, and were not thrown off balance when engaged in this new one.

The colonel joined us shortly, and I have rarely been so impressed with a colonel. I had a great admiration for the colonel of my own battalion up at Messines, and here, I could see, was another of similar type: breadth of outlook;

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experience; kind-heartedness; but strong in discipline as a steel mast. I thought then, as I have often thought before and since, what a dreadful pity it is that men like this are as vulnerable to modern war implements as the frailest and most useless recruit! One "rat-tat" from a machine-gun, a piece of lead the size of half an inch of lead pencil, and the strongest melt back into the clay.

We all had lunch with that Colonel, a Major and various other officers, and were made most welcome. Again I noticed a better form of ease and familiarity than our army possesses. The equivalent situation, i. e., press men mixed with officers of a crack regiment would have led to verbal constipation in a British Army outfit. Here it was not so. Stories and jokes floated back and forth across the little table in that little village cottage with all the open-hearted good nature in the world. Now and then, I have found this atmosphere in the British Army but almost invariably among our less important battalions, and when they had been thawed down to this human note by warfare. The pre-war British regular military depot was a dire place for second lieutenants!

After lunch there happened to be parade for some of the men, followed by a football game. The Colonel asked us to view these sights, but first we went for a walk through the village and examined the billets. Here in all directions I saw the old familiar signs of discipline,—the well kept rifles and bayonets, the orderly equipment. I asked per-

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mission of the Colonel to make a detail sketch of a typical Marine with all the approved paraphernalia about him. I had an hour away in a room alone with a man he picked out as a good representative type. He posed as though carved in bronze, and long and earnestly did I gaze at him and weave a story about him for myself. Frequently in the war I would operate this way, for I felt it a vast aid to my drawings to have a close and perfectly accurate note of the various types and the details of their uniform and equipment. Once, up on the North Sea behind the Yser Canal, I spent many hours in an old cracked, shelled out, almost deserted hotel making sketches of one of the French African soldiers. The Spahis are a strange and wonderful group of French African cavalry. This man was a Spahi, and he, too, posed like a sphinx. Even when a wandering shell exploded on the sands outside he made no movement or comment. I can see him now, his lean, brown, hook-nosed face gazing out from under a complicated headgear that looked like a bandage on a giant's thumb.

The Marine I had before me as a model was just identical with one of our best non-commissioned officers, and I need say no more in his praise after that. Our N. C. O.'s have moved me to admiration and pity from the day they were entrusted with chasing me up and down the barrack square at six in the morning with a chilly rifle in my hands, to the time when I saw these wonderful, strong, reliable men crumple up under the hail of metal in an attack. This

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Marine had that look in the face that comes only from experience, endurance and discipline. The Colonel told me afterward that he was quite a rascal in his own right and had been reduced in rank a fair number of times. We took a short look at the football match and by easy stages came back to the cottage which served as the Colonel's headquarters. That night we sat around the table in the improvised dining-room and talked of the Philippines and Cuba, with now and again small doses of the Great War. I believe we had a drop or two of some local beverage, but I can not quite remember. It sounds unlikely if we didn't.

The days wore on at this job of mine, and slowly but surely the American Army was getting larger and stronger and ever nearer that terrific struggle with all its grim, stark horror. As I sat around with the doughboys behind those lines, I was aware of the sort of lines they were. I had seen Verdun and its outlying forts of Douaumont and Vaux. I knew the sort of place the St. Mihiel salient was, and the kind of stuff that lay away to the left in the shape of the Argonne and beyond. This was useful as a mental background, while I looked at the boys who were shortly to have that miserable area handed to them as a present.

The time came to leave the Marine village and go back to Neufchâteau. We left late at night in a large and powerful car driven at the velocity of light. I have endured many war drives, but this one beat all records for me. We just streaked down the long poplar-lined roads like a bullet, a

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short waltz at a corner, a jerk, skid and a bump, and we were off down the next straightaway again. That chauffeur took a few years off my life. Every shadow across the road looked like a brick wall which we were about to strike dead on. I felt it would be so sad and dull to have lived through a few battles and gas attacks and then be finished up on a brick wall at the back of the line. However, by some accident we were not killed, but alighted at Neufchâteau where we all separated for our respective billets. There is a slogan in use in America which reads: "Join the Marines and See the World." I got a slogan for myself that night which I felt fitted me better.: "Go to the Marines and See the Next One."

Having observed the humor among the American soldiers, I could see quite clearly what would happen when they met the Germans. I could have prophesied also what was going to happen to their enthusiastic ardor, their original feeling that there wasn't much to learn about that attacking game and their disposition to wonder why we had all been sitting there so long. I'm afraid this confident impetuosity, an excellent fault, cost them dearly in the first few encounters. Nobody, until he has been in a big attack, can imagine fully what it is like, and the peculiar things that may happen. A battle in theory and a battle in practise are two entirely different things. The best laid schemes of generals all go agley. The whole thing can get out of control and seem impossible to straighten out.

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The biggest battle I have ever been in, as a member of the front row, was the second battle of Ypres, which included the first gas attack. It was as good a muddle as you could wish to see. I know nothing of what the plans were, and I met many seniors who did not either. All I saw for myself with my own eyes was that the Germans had as good a chance to break through as they could ever have had; only I fancy they were in a muddle too.

I hesitate to blame anybody for I know how difficult it must be, but there is no question about it, many of our battles were inefficient muddles costing the lives of thousands. A battle in a few minutes can get completely divorced from the previously arranged plan. Some troops can't get where they are supposed to go, others get too far, all communications are cut. The reserves aren't where they ought to be, the officers are killed, the men grow bewildered with what it's all about and what is happening. The enemy does the thing you thought he wouldn't do. The barrage makes some plan impossible. Add to this, messages that don't arrive, orders that can't be carried out, mud, motor-lorries, night and rain, and you can imagine the sort of state these outings can get into. I'd like to see Napoleon handle one of that kind. The English soldier knows scarcely anything about the big scheme. He doesn't particularly want to. He scarcely knows who is on his left or right. He has a local mind and only dimly inquires into anything pertaining to other parts of the front. He takes all commands for granted

Hey! General, you can quit the big stuff. The boys want you over there to get some close ups



Looks as if this sort of thing is going to be prevalent in the next war

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as emanating from some one somewhere (he doesn't know or care who or where), which may or may not be right. That is not his affair. He fights in any direction pointed out by his officers. After that, he is cunningly interested in his own welfare and a few friends'. And yet, in a sense, he has to be an individual and think more for himself than under the German system. This individualism always comes as a nasty jar to machine-made, pawn-like soldiers.

I think these remarks hold pretty good for the American Army, for the individual thought and marksmanship of the men tied up the Germans time after time, as they came on in their masses, during the various engagements at Château Thierry. The same quality helped us at Mons. If a German battle plan doesn't work out exactly, they always seem to be sunk. Their soldiers are not so good when it comes to fighting in a disordered position that has suddenly arisen. A little touch of Abd-el-Krim's system is a handy thing to have about you in a war.

It doesn't take long to find out a few things not to do in a battle, as when you visit a coal mine, after bumping your head a couple of times on the ceiling, you learn to crouch. When I drew the picture, "If ye knows of a better 'ole go to it," I tried to show the wisdom of staying where you are until you are quite sure there is a better place to go to and the passage thither will be safe. That's a little feature you will find cropping up frequently in a battle.

Talking of battles brings me to the sore question of

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medals. The scarcity of them is one of the features I admire about the American Army. The English Army distributes few, but the American fewer. The whole idea of medals is bound to be unfair. There are thousands dead, who did unrecorded and unseen things in countless places, and got nothing. There are multitudes alive, who did equally fine things, and got nothing. Many, of course, who have medals now, deserved them, but there are many deserving others who missed them, due to the fortuitous nature of war. I am not talking at all about the medals that were strewn around behind the front—you could collect a fine assortment at the base—but of those distributed for valor. To be fair it would be necessary to give them away in shoals, as the French do. Croix-de-Guerres must have been made by the ton. It seemed quite a deal of trouble to find a French soldier without one. Like that, it would save a lot of time to get your tailor to sew one on before you started.

Our highest medal for bravery is the Victoria Cross (equivalent to the Congressional Medal), but how often has it happened that in the rain soaked night, two men would do some Homeric deed, something lonely that wanted the greatest courage, and one would get the Victoria Cross, the other, a wooden one! Owners of great medals are great men; they feel almost ashamed to have them. You were lucky, in the Great War, if you got the setting right for winning a medal. It's terribly annoying to have dashed through a jungle of barbed wire and a tornado of bombs to



This man went through Chateau Thierry,
the Argonne, St. Mihiel, and Soissons,
without a scratch. He was, however, acci-
dentally wounded at Hollywood during the
filming of NO MORE WAR

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bayonet six men single-handed, and then turn round to find your colonel wasn't looking.

The French like a ration issue of medals. They used to send a parcel of Croix-de-Guerres to this place and that, asking for them to be distributed. A bunch came to London, when I was working for the War Office. I wasn't standing near enough to get one in the scramble. The only advantage of a Croix-de-Guerre or an Iron Cross was that you felt ashamed if you didn't have one. You'd almost have to run away and refuse to come out of a cellar in Paris to miss a Croix-de-Guerre.

CHAPTER XVI

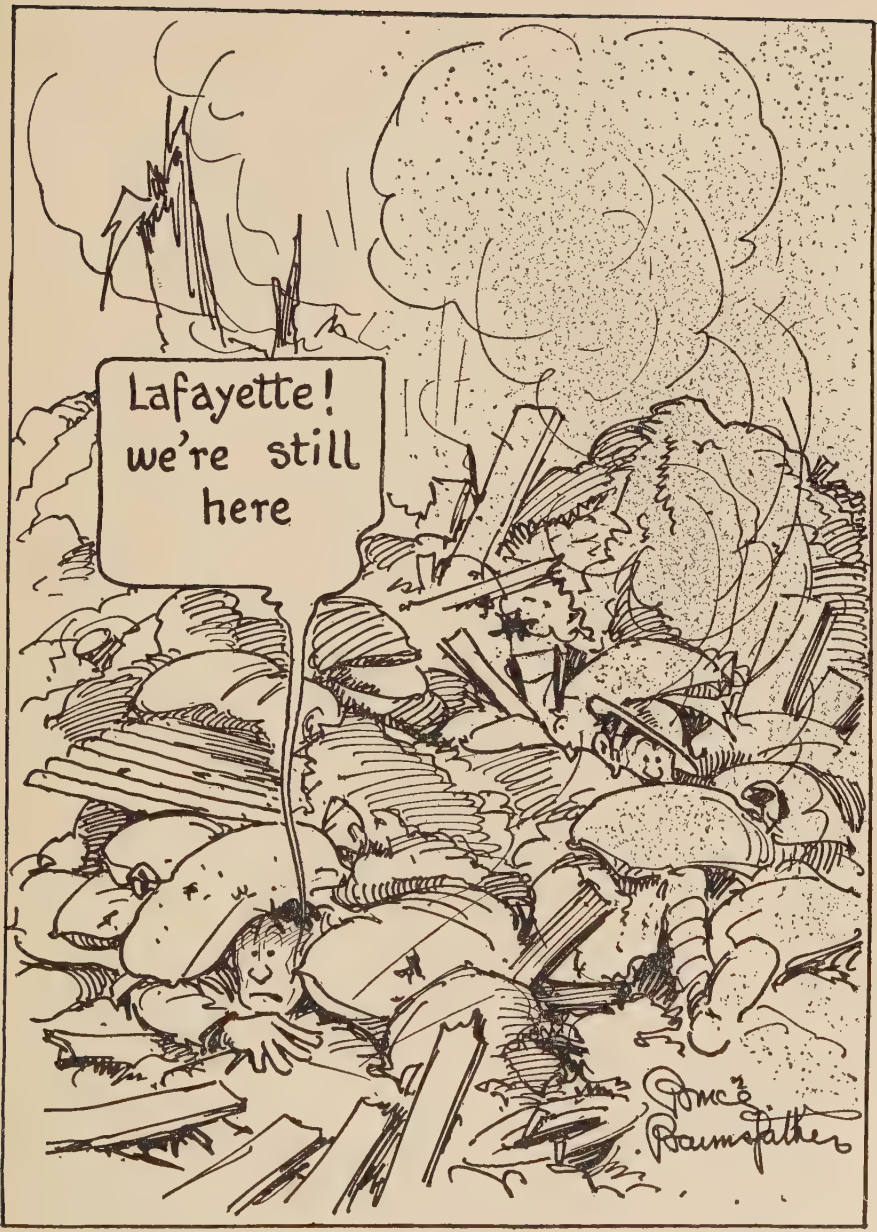
AS THE BELL RANG

I AM not a student of war, and neither is Old Bill, but when a war comes past our house, or we get an invitation to go to one, we naturally take what interest we can in it.

When we got that gilt-edged card with the Lion and the Unicorn printed on top, and the following words in good flowing type underneath:

His Majesty George V
requests the pleasure of the company of
Mr. Bruce Bairnsfather
and
Mr. William Busby
at a War starting August 4th
R. S. V. P.

we naturally wrote back to say we'd come. We went and became as interested as possible. Following up this interest, we found ourselves sitting back in an imaginary armchair on or about the first of September, 1918, and gazing toward

A black and white cartoon illustration depicting a scene of chaos and destruction. In the foreground, a man with a worried expression is lying on the ground, partially covered by debris. He is surrounded by a large pile of broken wooden planks and other debris. In the background, there are large, billowing clouds of smoke or dust, suggesting a recent explosion or fire. A speech bubble originates from the man, containing the text "Lafayette! we're still here". The artist's signature, "Tom & Raunfather", is visible in the bottom right corner of the illustration.

Lafayette!
we're still
here

Tom &
Raunfather

AS THE BELL RANG

that long line still stretching from the North Sea to Switzerland, but now of a different shape. We rubbed our eyes, dim with years of watching, and asked ourselves what the outlook was.

"You mark my words, Captin, it ain't far off the end now."

"Don't forget what you once said, Bill," I answered. "The first seven years will be the hardest; after that every fourteenth."

There was silence after this. We went on gazing, but as we gazed, there was a persistent streak of brightness to be seen piercing the leaden sky. Little could we see, however, on that September first what would happen by November eleventh! In seventy-two days from then the whole nightmare was to finish.

From the North Sea to Switzerland was a long tired line, except for one length of it, and that length was occupied by the American Army, which had now arrived at its mightiest pinnacle of strength. "What fools those Germans were!" we thought, to have played their cards in such a way as to bring this enormous thing against them.

One almost got a sense of pity for those armor-plated rascals who had started it all and who thought they were going to win so easily. Here they were now, still holding out on nerves, economy and patriotism. One felt the sorrow for them that every one feels for a great "trier" who fails.

The Germans, however misguided and annoying, cer-

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

tainly put up a great show. It practically took the world to ring them about and put their ambitions back in the box.

"It's near the end," Old Bill repeated, and when I thought of all I had seen along that front, when I recalled the talks I had had with German prisoners and remembered that vast thing America had brought over and was determined to maintain, I gazed harder, and as I did so, the bright streak across the leaden sky seemed to widen.

On September the twenty-sixth, what was to be the last round of the contest began; the vast battle along the Argonne Front was in motion. The end of this battle meant the end of the war. To face the American Army as it slashed at the Argonne in front, to keep off the British up at the top end on their right, and to hold off the French on their left, was now to the Germans a hopeless task. Before going down for a count of nine they threw the towel in. The Championship of the World was over. The Allies had won on points. Bill and I are two people who have always wished the bell had not rung just then. A little more, and we would have scored a knock-out.

CHAPTER XVII

FAMOUS WARS, INC.

YOU will, I dare say, have noticed a curious fact about the war,—that all countries took a far greater interest in the work of soldiers than in the work of sailors. There was also a far greater interest displayed about the Western Front than about any other front. I feel this was scarcely fair. Some of the other fronts had a pretty rough time of it, and the navies when they did have battles had exceedingly nasty ones. Thinking logically about it all, now that the whole thing is over, I feel that praise and appreciation have not been quite fairly and equally divided. The best part of the limelight was always turned on to those who sat in the very front row of the trenches. They were the heroes. That vast array behind who had to do so much to keep them there had far more work to do, but of course, less danger. Napoleon remarked that an army moves on its stomach. He got it nearly right, but that part about “moving” was wrong. In this war, there was no moving. The best part of it was spent in one place, but the stomachs were still there.

Feeding and clothing five million men for five years

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wants some doing. Making sufficient ammunition to try and kill the opposite five million also wants some organization. In fact as war on a modern scale is so vast, and there were so many muddles made in the last attempt, I invite careful consideration to the idea I suggested in Chapter II.

As soon as signs of the next war show up, let's give the whole thing over to some big firm to take care of; or possibly some big firm may arise by then that will specialize in the running of wars,—some great department store that can run a war in any part of the world and look after every detail. Government-controlled industry generally fails. Let the private firms do the thing properly. In my mind's eye I can see a great stone building, fifty stories high and about the size of the Capitol at Washington. Above the marble portals in ponderous gilt letters six feet deep is the name of the firm, "Famous Wars, Inc.," and, in a line beneath, the firm's slogan: "What a whale of a difference a few camels make." Let us, in imagination, enter this desirable edifice and observe the hum of life within.

On a blackboard near the elevators are written in white letters the names of the various departments, and on which floors they may be found.

Bargain Basement

Old soldiers, any color and size, prices reduced owing to temporary peace (Hospital Nurses through Subway).

Ground Floor

Uniforms of all sizes for all climates.

FAMOUS WARS, INC.

First Floor

Contracting,

Wars, Rebellions, Revolutions.

Second Floor

Barbed Wire and Jam.

You get the idea. Now let us take the elevator and enter the offices on the First Floor and by making inquiries discover how this much needed organization works.

Mr. Wanagimbel sits at a large desk with a glass top, in a lofty and magnificent room. Around him in other offices Under Managers at smaller desks dictate letters to stenographers. In the distance the roar of a battery of typewriters can be heard. The scene is full of life.

Beside Mr. Wanagimbel sits Miss Clutterbuck, his private secretary, who is taking down a letter at dictation.

Mr. Wanagimbel leans back in his chair, paper in hand and proceeds:

“And we should like to point out that we are in a position to start your revolution on Monday week. Anticipating your check for fifty per cent. of the cost price in advance, i. e., \$200,000,000, and assuring you of our best attention, we beg to remain

Famous Wars, Inc.”

Mr. Wanagimbel leans forward.

“Now get that off to Mexico as soon as you can, and tell Smith I’ll see that man about a war in the Balkans now.”

Miss Clutterbuck rises and leaves the room.

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Presently a tall, distinguished-looking man in a frock coat and a two-gallon hat enters, advances and shakes hands with Mr. Wanagimbel. He is given a seat. After a nervous cough he begins thus:

"We propose running a war, Mr. Wanagimbel, and it is our wish that you should go into the question and give us an estimate of what it would cost."

"Quite, quite."

"We haven't any money, but as you know we can always borrow it from America or England on the strict understanding that we never pay it back."

"Quite, quite."

"Well, to come to the point, it is the desire of my Government to ally themselves with the Turks, Slovacs, Croats and two-thirds of Bosnia, and strike a decisive blow at the Kurds, Armenians and Zkechokps."

"Quite, quite."

"By this means we hope to split the alliance which now exists between the pro-dynastic democracy and the followers of the old régime."

"Quite, quite. But—er—to come to business about the actual details—er—you will require soldiers, and—er—plenty of them?"

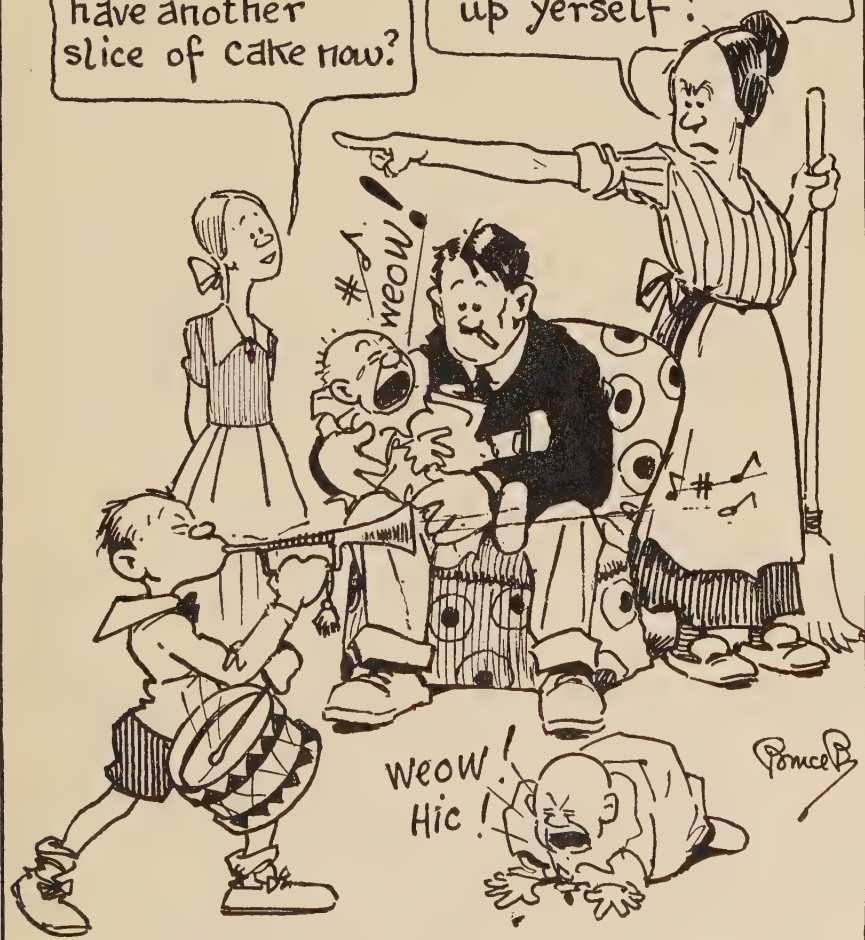
"Yes, we shall require say something like eight million."

"Quite. And of course there is a considerable reduction on taking a quantity, but I am afraid that—er—"

The tall man in the frock coat looks anxious. "You don't

Momma, can I
have another
slice of cake now?

If you want to drop
cigarette ashes around
you can pick 'em
up yerself!



There are some who frequently wish for another war as a rest from peace

FAMOUS WARS, INC.

mean to tell me you are out of soldiers?" he says with a nervous quiver in his voice.

"Well," continues Mr. Wanagimbel, "it's like this. You see, owing to the war we're running in Northern Russia and the rebellion in China, we are rather low at the moment. However," he pauses and rings a bell on his table, "I'll see what we can do for you. Meanwhile let us consider the other details. Ahem, let me see—if you have eight million soldiers, you will want forty million tons of mud and one hundred billion yards of barbed wire."

The door opens and Mr. Cartwright, the Sales Manager, stands in the doorway.

"Mr. Cartwright, how do we stand for soldiers?"

"Not very good, sir. We're expecting a consignment back from that rising in Patagonia, but in the meantime we only have three left, very good ones, though, excellent for a war in Europe."

Mr. Wanagimbel frowns and taps his desk with his finger tips.

"Bring the three up, Mr. Cartwright. This gentleman would like to see some samples."

Mr. Cartwright bows and withdraws, while Mr. Wanagimbel resumes the conversation with his client.

"Well, three is a start anyway. That leaves 7,999,997 still to be found."

His client looks worried. "I don't think we could begin with three," he says sadly.

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“It all depends on the three, for instance——”

The door opens and Bill, Bert and Alf are marched into the room.

“Are these soldiers?” says the client in a scornful voice, as he views the trio.

“Soldiers!” ejaculates Mr. Wanagimbel; “soldiers, my dear sir? Why, these are three of the very best on the market. If you will allow me I will just put one question to them, which will show you that their heart is in the right place.” He turns and faces the three, as they stand in a row before his desk.

“Private Busby!”

Old Bill straightens himself and gazes over his mustache at his manager.

“Yus, sir.”

“If duty called you and you felt your country, everything you possess, was at stake, would you not protect your king?”

“It all depends who’d got the Ace, sir.” . . .

The three pillars of war are removed from the office.

The client feels that after all it will perhaps be better to move his war from Tuesday to Wednesday week, but the great Emporium goes on its way handling wars on strict business lines.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CALL OF THE MUD

THE war ended, I returned to England with the valiant and popular intention, in vogue at the time, of forgetting all about it and leaving that rotten, sodden mass of trench-scarred territory forever. I believe criminals feel this way when they have satisfactorily escaped from some locality where they have successfully got away with murder. But, just as with murderers, a time came when something seemed to draw me back toward that war-soaked land. I felt a peculiar and romantic desire to stand at midnight on the spot where once my first trench had been. I wanted to search for the exact place where that shell at Ypres had interrupted my career.

I wanted to see if those billets I knew so well were still there, and—well a host of other things.

This was a year or so after the end of the struggle. I am sure many have felt the same yearning.

The vague desire became a fixed purpose, but my work interfered with its realization for some time. At last, having launched a play in London and seen it run its course, I decided to re-visit the scene of my former crimes.

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I had by this time an additional incentive for my pilgrimage. Like Old Bill, I had acquired a "Maggie" too, and as is the custom with husbands, had an ardent desire to show my "For better or for worse" what the front was like, "where I once lived," and several other boring details.

We decided to go to Paris, and thence to Amiens, which city, I felt, would be the best jumping-off place for an examination of the part of the line that had been my cradle in the war. In due course we arrived at Amiens with a car and a bundle of maps. I was most anxious to go straight to Messines and search for the very trench in which I first lived and first began to draw. I was in quest of the birthplace of Old Bill. After consulting maps and filling up with gas and *table d'hôte*, we started off up the road which leads through Albert, a small town celebrated mainly for the leaning statue, which, although shelled steadily, was never brought down till near the conclusion of the fracas. From Albert the road leads on through the sordid blackened mining area of La Bassée, on to that celebrated war-time city of Armentières. We arrived at Armentières late at night and drove through the town looking for a hotel. We found one opposite the station. It was easy to find, for, as I could see, it was about the only whole building in the place, and this was because it had been patched up for the use of tourists, who were now coming to the area from all parts of the world. We booked a room in the hostelry and stowed the car away in the yard near by.

THE CALL OF THE MUD

It seemed so peculiar to me to be able to drive up and spend the night in a hotel at Armentières. The last time I had been there, life in any street or house was most unwholesome. The Germans emptied a pretty fair supply of their flying ashcans into that place when things were at their height.

My wife went up-stairs to size up our room and see to our luggage. I went into the bar below to . . . Now then it's time you went to bed, Harold.

That bar was crammed to the lid with a mixture of residents, soldiers left behind on some clearing-up commission or other, and a few strange-looking tourists. As I stood by the counter with my malted milk, a man came up to me and started to talk. I found that by process of time a sect of guides had arisen in the neighborhood, and this was one of them. I led him on to tell me about the war, and about this part of the front in particular. One of the most interesting pieces of information that he handed out to me was that he could show me exactly where "Bairnsfather first began to draw, and also a portion of one of his original drawings which was still left on an old farm-house wall." This was most interesting. "I should love to see one of Bairnsfather's drawings," I said. He was delighted and volunteered to conduct us to the place next day.

Before going to bed that night my wife and I took a walk round Armentières, while I broadcasted stories of the days of old.

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

The place looked as if the war was still on. As far as I could see, little had been done to patch it together. As with a badly broken vase, one sometimes wonders whether it would be worth it, or whether it would not be better to buy a new one. We sauntered down a dark and dreary-looking street and paused at the door of a brightly lighted café. A sort of Wurlitzer organ was playing inside for the benefit of a group of dejected Frenchmen who sat around at naked tables. The organ seemed ahead of them in joyfulness. The street beyond the café got darker and more depressing, looking something like Doré's picture of the *Subway to Hell*; so we decided to return, go to bed and get ready for the trip of the morrow.

The next morning, the guide who had been lying in wait for me as a customer pounced out from somewhere and offered to show me the front and explain all about the trenches. Something told me that I knew a thing or two about the front and the trenches. I had read about them and seen pictures of them, anyway. But I let him talk and led him on to give me further details of where Bairnsfather's picture on the wall could be seen. I recognized by his description which farm he meant but said nothing. I gave him a tip to finish the debate and prepared to start off on my cruise around the old landmarks. We began by driving up the road which leads directly from Armentières to Messines. During the war this road was interrupted after reaching Plugstreet Wood by the English and German

THE CALL OF THE MUD

trenches that sat right across it. Now they had smoothed it out again. I shall never forget how I felt as we drove ever nearer to the birthplace of Old Bill. Here we were speeding in safety and ease over roads that I had many a time marched along in gloom and depression. Everything looked different, and yet everything was just the same. Every house, tree, hill and wood seemed to possess a dual personality, to be a sort of Jekyll and Hyde, as it were. We pulled up at the top of the hill, whereon once stood a château that commanded a view of Plugstreet Wood. Here I decided to get out. This spot used to be the ration dump for the first trenches I knew. It was impossible to use the car further as the trenches, or what was now left of them, lay off across the fields to one side, and only a narrow boggy lane could lead us any nearer. Leaving the car at the site of the château, we walked toward the place that was once my first trench in the war. People at home had told me I couldn't find it, but I knew that landscape so well, with all its perishable and imperishable landmarks, that I had little difficulty in tracing things out.

The changes brought about by farmers and time were, of course, enormous, but I found what I sought, the exact spot where I had spent those clammy winter nights and drawn my first sketches of Old Bill.

I took a walk across to where the Germans used to be and looked back to see what sort of view they had suffered from. It gave me a queer feeling.

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

There had been many a fight over the ground since my days there, and Plugstreet Wood was gone. Another wood had sprung up in its place, a wood of small white crosses. Round about in the fields peasants were toiling, much as they toiled, I suppose, after Blenheim and Waterloo.

We went back to the car again and decided to search for that alleged drawing of mine on the farm-house wall. After cruising around a bit via Messines we got to the nearest point from which to approach the farm, for this, too, lay off the main road. I knew the farm well, and the guide had his instructions right. I had lived in the place for a considerable period, and it was true, also, that I had drawn on the walls. We went across the fields and through a fringe of shattered poplars to have a look.

The farm-house was now only just discernible. A pile of broken bricks and a few jagged bits of wall were all that remained. It was almost entirely surrounded by a graveyard. On one mutilated piece of still plastered wall was the small portion of drawing that the guide had meant. It was amazing to see! I was completely overcome. . . . The drawing had been made by somebody else!

Still reveling in the desire to visit the old haunts again and to see places of sweet memory, I decided to go up to Ypres and find the exact spot where that shell had wafted me from the war. I found the place, approximately, out near Saint Julien it was, and I stood a while in tears of gratitude. I would like to have the man who fired that



*Yours very
sincerely
Bill*

*Ponce
Rainsfather.*

THE CALL OF THE MUD

shell paged in Germany, and then take a trip over to thank him. I can so clearly remember his kindness. There was the sound as of an express train flying overhead, followed by a crash that might be imitated by dropping a submarine through the roof of the Grand Central Station. A cloud of black smoke and a fountain of earth and mud! I was in the cloud or the fountain, I don't quite recollect which. I think I must have been on top of the fountain, bouncing around like these celluloid balls in a shooting gallery.

The spot where I now stood was, roughly speaking, about the center of that very distressing affair, the "First Gas Attack." It was considerably harder to recognize old landmarks here than at Bill's birthplace. There had been so many battles crashing along over the same ground that it was surprising if one recognized anything.

Trenches, dugouts, barbed wire and battles ignored the native positions of châteaux, roads, farms and whole villages. If it was thought advisable for a line of trenches to run in any particular direction, they ignored gardens, walls and parlors as serenely as wireless waves on their uninterrupted path. If a trench passed through your pet flower bed, cut your greenhouse in half, and went on through the dining-room out into the fields beyond, there was some good reason for it. Lucky indeed were those whose property did not happen to stand in the way.

As we surveyed the neighborhood and observed feeble endeavors at rebuilding, I could not help feeling that either

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the inhabitants were optimistic as to the future, or they had taken out wonderful insurance policies. This vicinity has been used for wars so often. And yet, I reflected, people always go back and rebuild and live round volcanoes after eruptions, and nothing will induce them to refrain from rebuilding in a larger and grander way, on the same site, after an earthquake.

Satiated with looking at all the war spots that meant so much to me, we drove back through Ypres and on down the Popenughe road into what was once Bailleul. Here the devastation was so great that it was impossible to reconstruct, in mind even, the town I knew so well. Just one vague spread of powdered bricks and meaningless lumps of timber and masonry. To try to patch up the old houses that once stood there would be as sensible as wanting to find a bottle because you possessed a cork.

We did not stop at this city. There was nothing to stop at. So away we went turning south, down the long poplar-lined roads, toward Amiens, and thence to Paris. The Revisitation was over. As we whirled along those roads, back from the land of cheaply mended ruins and graveyards, I got a clearer perspective of that war, all that it meant at the time, all that it meant after, and all that it will mean in the days to come.

Just lumps of granite and marble will mark its memories in time,—lumps that still later will be used to strike matches on.

CHAPTER XIX

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

IT IS now years since the memorable and remarkable upheaval, the human earthquake that, like an earthly one, seemed to relieve smoldering fires and accumulated pressure.

Since the Armistice I have been to America many times and have traveled from coast to coast and from boundary to boundary. I have met ex-residents of the Mud in all parts of the Continent and in scores of different places talked of all those bygone adventures. I have observed the passing of that period which immediately followed the war, when everybody said, "Let's forget it," and I have observed the steady recurrence of a desire to talk it all over again.

The thing was too human and big to be lightly rubbed out and forgotten. In one of my rambles round America, after visits at many cities, I arrived in Washington, and by a curious coincidence it happened to be Armistice week.

My work was at one of the theaters, drawing and telling the story of Old Bill.

Some time before, while performing in the city of Bir-

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mingham (the Pittsburgh of England), I had been presented with a remarkably fine model of the old walrus. As I write, this treasure is beside me. It is an aluminum bust made by a total stranger from a study of my efforts on paper and on the stage.

Late on the night of November eleventh, after the show was over, I found myself in my room at the Washington hotel, resting, smoking and thinking, with the ever present aluminum bust of Old Bill on the table by my bed. The light from a small shaded lamp struck down with yellow brilliance on the curved surface of his helmet, casting his rugged features into enigmatic shadow. Somehow that aluminum bust looked alive that night. It looked larger, as large as life, and seemed to be enveloped by an actual presence. . . . It seemed as though Old Bill himself were there,—Old Bill with all his war-worn, muddy khaki, his ragged muffler, and that bunch of violets Maggie gave him when he got home. They looked a bit faded now, and drooped on the lapel of his greatcoat. Old Bill, who stood as a symbol for that vast and valiant band of brothers, who, from those marvelous days way back at Mons up till that still more marvelous day when the whole thing stopped, seemed to stand before me. As I gazed upon him, he appeared to move. A restless look was in his eyes. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, I saw that rugged warrior of a thousand memories edge toward the door.

Far away, down-stairs, in the Palm Court of the hotel,

wish I could say
"NEVER MORE"
about this stuff



The Raven

CARRY ON SERGEANT!

I heard the band playing the chorus of *Tipperary*. Quite a natural thing, for after all it was Armistice night.

Tipperary! Old Bill's National Anthem, a tune that is destined to go down with the war in immortal memory. Now even, if you stand alone at night where once those poppies waved, you can hear the song that meant so much sung by a ghostly band of brothers who have long since gone. Across the fields where shattered barns once stood, and dank and gloomy trenches streaked their way, through whispering leaves of poplar trees, along the cobbled roads . . . Listen! You can hear it still! . . . the sad refrain that cheered:

Good-bye, Piccadilly! farewell, Leicester Square!
It's a long way to Tipperary, but my heart's right there!

I looked over to where Old Bill had been standing. The room was empty. I rose with rapidity, and, seizing my hat, decided to find him. Passing out through the front door of the hotel, as though guided by some irresistible magnet, I found myself ordering a taxi driver to take me out to Arlington. Down through the open, park-like city of Washington, over the bridge which leads to the Virginia shore, up the slightly rising ground to the right, on we sped, leaving the Potomac a silver streak behind.

I entered the great lonely cemetery, and something told me Old Bill was somewhere near. Passing the still white

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signs of other bygone wars, at length I reached the terrace that looks down upon the river. Then, suddenly in the moonlight, I saw before me, what, in my thoughts, I knew I should see. Hat in hand, with head and shoulders bowed, stood Old Bill, and just beyond him in the gentle shadows lay the tomb, that simple marble tomb that needs no further grandeur.

Creeping softly up behind across the intervening space, I heard the old man speak:

“Mate o’ mine, I’ve got a lot to say, and yet I don’t know how. I know what you went out and did, old pal, you who went three thousand miles, and now you’re ’ere back ’ome, with that there job well done. . . .

“Some’ow, standin’ ’ere like this, it makes me feel ashamed to be alive.”

He fumbled at the lapel of his coat and, drawing out the forlorn bunch of violets that I had seen there, placed them slowly among the wreaths already on the tomb.

“There you are, old son. Maggie give me those because she says ’as how what they mean . . . never dies. . . . That’s why they’re fit for you!”

Bill paused, and then he stood upright with his arms pressed into his sides, as though called to attention, and I heard him mutter, “CARRY ON, SERGEANT!”

THE END



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